

Brighton Grammar's concealed weapon

Brighton Grammar has a hidden weapon on the campus. In fact it is a 75mm cannon, and is so well concealed that no one is quite sure where it is.

This gun was taken in Palestine on 30th September 1918 when the 4th Australian Light Horse Regiment captured two artillery pieces, one of which was, after the war, allotted to Brighton Grammar as a trophy.

A number of guns were distributed to various schools and organizations throughout Victoria. Brighton Grammar was probably favoured because one of its boarders, William Grant 1870 – 1939, became Brigadier General Grant D.S.O., Order of the Nile, C.M.G. He was commander of the 4th Light Horse Brigade and led his men in the last great cavalry charge in October 1917 which led to the capture of Beersheba from the Turks and Germans.

Whatever the circumstances, the gun arrived, and was placed on the lawn outside the tower where it stood until 1947.

After nearly thirty years the wooden spokes of the wheels had seriously deteriorated and it appeared imminent that the gun would collapse

Harry Zachariah, Honorary Archivist B.G.S. writes:- P.T. classes were organized to fill in the former creek which sheared off portion of Crowther Oval. Shrubs and peppercorn trees were cut and the creek filled. It was suggested that the seriously decayed gun be buried in the creek bed. By this time the gun had become an object of derision. On a more happy occasion the school may have attempted rebuilding the wooden portions. But shortly after the war the school was in desperate need of repair. Money and manpower were not available. Burial seemed the best solution for the gun.

Dr Geoffrey Bowell, an old boy of the school, remembers slit trenches on the oval and surmises that the gun may have been interred in one of these when they were filled. He has contacted a Sappers unit of the Australian army to ask if members of the unit can help locate the lost weapon. Sappers are the engineers of the army, used, among other duties, for detecting hidden land mines and Dr. Bowell hopes their detectors may locate the lost gun.

Much has changed since the gun was buried in 1947. Australians now have a different view of the sacrifices made in war by their parents and grandparents. Australians, young and old flock in ever increasing numbers to war memorial services. Thousands of us visit old battlefields and listen with interest to the guides recounting the campaigns of our servicemen. If the old gun were to be dug up and restored, this time it would be treated more respectfully.



The illustration above shows a French manufactured 75mm Schneider field gun captured from the Turks. Perhaps this is the one buried on the oval at Brighton Grammar School.

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