

Queensland's Carron Cannon

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What became known as the Australian state of Queensland was first seen by Europeans in the 1600s when Dutch explorer Willem Jansz landed on the Cape York Peninsula in 1606 and again in 1623 when Jan Carstens explored the Gulf of Carpentaria. In 1770 an Englishman, Lieutenant James Cook, is acknowledged as the first European to encounter Queensland's east coast in 1770 in HMS **Endeavour**. Europeans settled in Queensland from 1825 when Brisbane was selected as a penal settlement for the more difficult convicts. The penal settlement was officially closed in 1839 and the land was prepared for sale for permanent free settlement.

Queensland was originally part of the British-administered colony of New South Wales. This occupied a large part of the Australian continent. A desire to separate from New South Wales began to emerge as Queensland's economic significance increased and its productivity and population expanded. The people of Queensland began to realise the importance of Brisbane as a port and urban centre. The physical remoteness of Queensland from the centre of government in New South Wales and growing concern about the maintenance of public infrastructure contributed to a desire for independence. In 1851 a public meeting was held to consider Queensland's separation from New South Wales. It was not until 6 June 1859 that Queen Victoria signed Letters Patent to form the colony of Queensland. On 10 December 1859 the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, arrived to proclaim the creation of the Colony of Queensland. On arrival, he noted that "*there is not a single soldier in Queensland.*"

Under the provisions of his Order-in-Council Bowen was authorised to create a volunteer defence force and he responded enthusiastically to the task. This was in line with the imperial policy of having colonies undertake their own defence and thereby reduce British expenditure throughout the empire and in 1861 Governor Bowen sought cannon from the United Kingdom for the colony's own defence and as a result twelve 24-pounder muzzle loading cannon were gifted to Queensland. Their whereabouts since production was not recorded and as by the 1860s they would be considered obsolete pieces, they were most likely removed from storage or reserves. The Carron cannon departed from Plymouth in England on 29 December 1861 and arrived as cargo aboard the migrant ship '**Clifton**' on 9 April 1862. The guns then approaching their obsolescence were unloaded at Harris Wharf. By 31 May 1862 they were moved and stored at the Commissariat Store. They were products of the Carron Company of Falkirk which had been established in 1759 and each were mounted on a Garrison Standing Carriage with iron wheels.

The Carron Iron Company, known originally as Roebucks, Garbett and Cadells, began manufacture of ordnance in November 1761 when they cast a 6-pounder gun. The company had only been founded less than two years previously and had no real knowledge of ordnance production and only a month earlier the managing partner, William Cadell, had made a special visit to Edinburgh Castle where he supposedly took measurements and patterns of some of the guns there. In early 1762 Carron made an offer to the Board of Ordnance to supply guns of various calibres with carriages and shot though only the latter was found to be acceptable to the Board. It was not until 1764 that the company was awarded a contract to supply guns to the Board and over the next few years the quality of the guns supplied by Carron was erratic, having a higher rejection and failure rate than those produced elsewhere. The matter finally came to a head in 1773 after the Board of Ordnance found that the Carron guns were made from badly refined metal and as a result the Carron Company lost its contract. Guns supplied by them were then systematically removed from the ships of the navy. A new furnace was built at the Carron Works in 1774 which suggests they were aware of the need to improve their iron. Until that time it had been the practice to cast the guns around a central newel (a pole covered with clay, resembling a gun barrel) and then bore them. It was discovered that guns cast solid and then bored gave a better result which, from that time onwards, became the preferred method of

Queensland's Carron Cannon

manufacture. In 1775 John Wilkinson, the celebrated English iron founder, invented a new cannon boring machine where the casting sat in a horizontal position and turned while the boring bit or cutter advanced into it. The principle was adopted for all guns made at Carron Works which from thereon were cast solid and then accurately bored out on this new machine. Carron's first gun so made in 1776 was known as the 'Light New Constructed Gun.' Guns ceased to be made at Carron by the 1850s.

Serial numbers were allocated to guns at Carron as they were cast irrespective of their type or model. This was usually placed on the left hand trunnion, with "CARRON" underneath and the year of manufacture below that. Altogether Carron Company despatched 52,170 pieces of ordnance of which

22,591 were carronades. Production had started with the lower calibres and so these tend to skew the statistics. To date, the Falkirk Historical Society has recorded the current whereabouts of 170 of the Carron-produced cannon, though this did not include all 11 of the Queensland cannon, and cannot be considered a comprehensive list.

In 1863 ten of the Queensland Cannon were moved to form a saluting battery in Queens Park, now the Brisbane Botanical Gardens near the corner of Edward and Alice Streets overlooking the Brisbane River. The battery first fired on 24 May 1863 in celebration of Queen Victoria's 45th birthday.

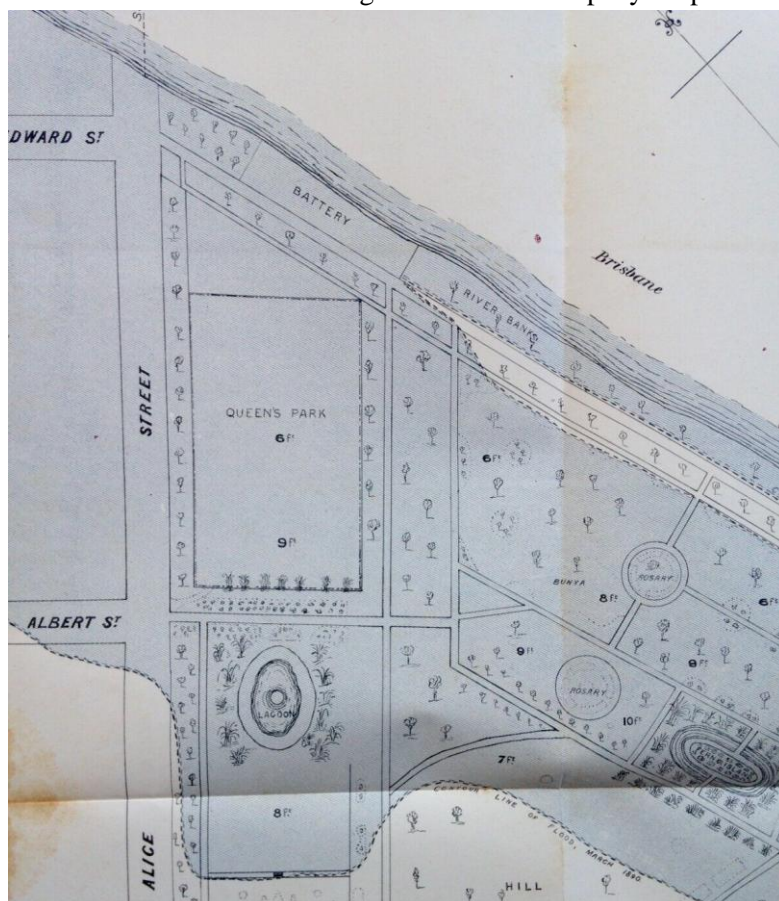


Figure 1: Battery position upper left shown on the 1893 flood map.

Figure 2: 24-pounders in position in Queen's Park with Kangaroo Point cliffs visible in the background.

The cannons were used for training and saluting purposes on ceremonial occasions such as the opening and closing of Parliamentary sessions, annual firings in salute of the Queen's birthday, and in salute on the arrival of various governors. In 1866 one was sent to the Observatory for use as a time gun (No 11); the following year one was



Queensland's Carron Cannon

moved to St Helena Penal Colony to serve as a signal gun (No. 5). Then, in 1885 two guns were despatched to Townsville (nos. 6 & 10), one to Cooktown (No. 8) and in 1867 one was sent to Cairns (No. 12). By the early 1890s all of the remaining Carron cannon had been removed from the saluting position, replaced by 9-pounders and the Carron cannon were placed in storage at the Adelaide Street Drill Hall.

Figure 3:
1910
postcard of
the Queen's
Park Battery
showing 9-
pounders in
position.



Following the federation of Australian states, by 1903 Australia's defence had become a Commonwealth responsibility and during 1911-1912 the Carron cannon were offered to the Brisbane City Council for display in public parks. Since then, they have occupied a multitude of display positions around the state from Brisbane to Cooktown and it has been difficult to locate specific ones to set locations. What follows is my own attempt to map their whereabouts.

LIST OF CANNON

1. Carron 56060 dated 1797



Current location; 9 Royal Queensland Regiment Museum, Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera, Queensland.

56060 was moved to the Brisbane City Council (BCC) Nursery Depot at Crosby Park in 1911 and remained there in storage until 1957 when it was transferred to the Australian Army and positioned at the headquarters of the 9th Royal Queensland Regiment at Gona Barracks at Kelvin Grove. With the closure and sale of the Gona Barracks precinct in 1997, the gun was moved to Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera and is currently displayed at the 9th Royal Queensland Regiment Museum - the museum can be viewed by appointment.

Figure 4: 56060 as displayed at the 9th Royal Queensland Regiment Museum, 2025.

Queensland's Carron Cannon

2. Carron 56719 dated 1797

Current location: Queensland Maritime Museum, Southbank Brisbane Queensland.

In 1911 this cannon was moved to the BCC Nursery Depot at Crosby Park where it remained until the 1950s. As a result of a submission by the Queensland Electricity Generating Board (QEGB) in 1954 requesting any cannon for display purposes, it was moved to the grounds of the Gibson Island Power Station facing the Brisbane River.



Figure 5: 56719 is said to be the cannon at the rear in this photo, apparently from the 1960s.

In 1986, two of four Carron cannon then on display (56719 & 76359) were handed over to Queensland Maritime Museum (QMM) by the Queensland Electricity Generation Board at the closure of Bulimba A Power Station.

Figure 6: QEGB presenting Carron cannon to the Queensland Maritime Museum. QMM photograph.

The following year the two Carron guns were moved to Queensland Maritime Museum and restored as naval guns with wooden wheels or trucks in time for Expo 88.



Figure 7: 56719 currently on display as restored. QMM Photograph.

Queensland's Carron Cannon

3. Carron 57972 dated 1798

Current location: Fort Lytton National Park, Lytton Queensland.

Figure 8: Markings on 57972 while displayed at Wynnum Foreshore. Bob Richardson photograph.

In 1863 ten of the Carron cannon were placed in a saluting battery position in Queen's Park (Brisbane Botanical Gardens) near the corner of Edwards and Alice Streets in Brisbane. On 15 January 1879 personnel of Number Three Garrison Battery were detailed to provide the customary seventeen-gun salute for the opening of the first session of the eighth parliament. Three guns had been allocated for the days firing. Twenty-two men had been detailed, six allocated for each gun. It would appear that human error in sponging out this gun after firing and then reloading a fresh charge on top of embers led to a premature discharge and resulted in the deaths of two men in the act of reloading the cannon, Gunners Walsh and Wilkie, and an injury to gun commander Sgt Craft. The gun was examined and no fault was found with it.



They remained in this position for the next three decades though by 1898, all of the Carron cannon were reported as removed from the saluting position and in storage at the Adelaide Street Drill Hall.



No details are known of its storage or movements until the cannon was reported in The Daily Mail of 30 November 1916 to be at Fort Lytton and in poor condition. Shortly after 57972 was moved to public display on the Wynnum Foreshore.

Figure 9: 57972 on Wynnum foreshore where is served as a plaything for many years. Wynnum Manly Historical Society photograph.

The Brisbane City Council granted permission on 9 August 1973 for the Arms Collectors Guild of Queensland (ACGQ) to remove the Carron gun and two 64-pounder guns for restoration by their members.

Figure 10: 57972 under restoration by ACGQ Members. B. Richardson photograph.

At a formal ceremony in October 1979, the restored Carron gun was presented to Brisbane Mayor Frank Sleeman in King George Square.



Queensland's Carron Cannon



Figure 11: ACGQ Members Tony Cude and Ritchie Foreman with Brisbane Mayor Frank Sleeman. B. Richardson photograph.

Following display in the foyer of the Brisbane City Hall, in 1983 this Carron cannon was moved to Wynnum and displayed at the Wynnum Municipal Reserve in Tingal Road. At some point it then moved to Wynnum Library. As a result of an approach by the National Parks and Wildlife Services of Queensland, dated 16 July 1990, 57972 was moved to

Fort Lytton National Park, and in 1992 replaced by 60756 which was then on public display at the Fort Lytton National Park. (Note: the presentation plate attached by ACGQ from 1979 was removed from 57972 and placed on 60756).

Figure 12: 57972 currently (2025) on display at the Fort Lytton National Park. R. Finlay photograph.

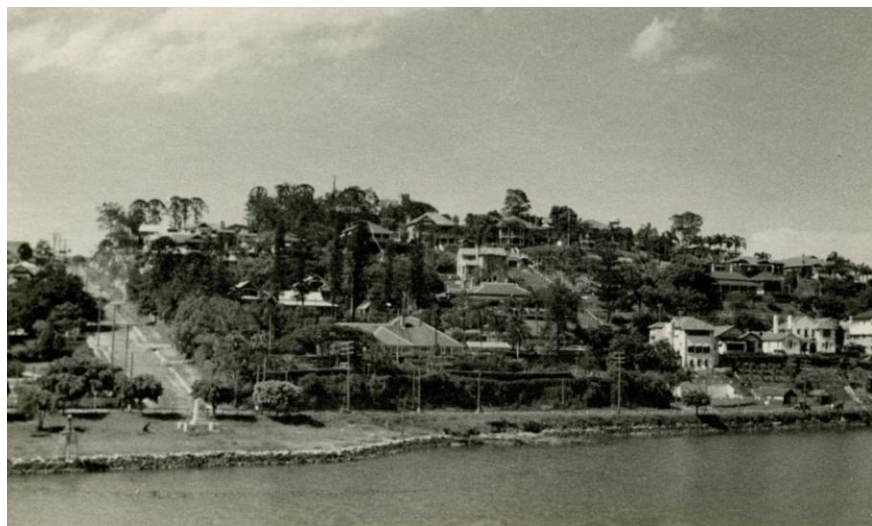


4. Carron 60756 dated 1800.

Current location: Wynnum Central Park, Wynnum Queensland.

In 1911 this Carron cannon was moved to the BCC Nursery Depot at Crosby Park where it remained until 1949 when it was placed on public display in the company of a second Carron cannon at the Cameron Rocks reserve.

Figure 13: One Carron cannon can be seen to the left of the memorial.



Queensland's Carron Cannon



Figure 15: 60756 is the cannon to the right in this 1960s photograph.

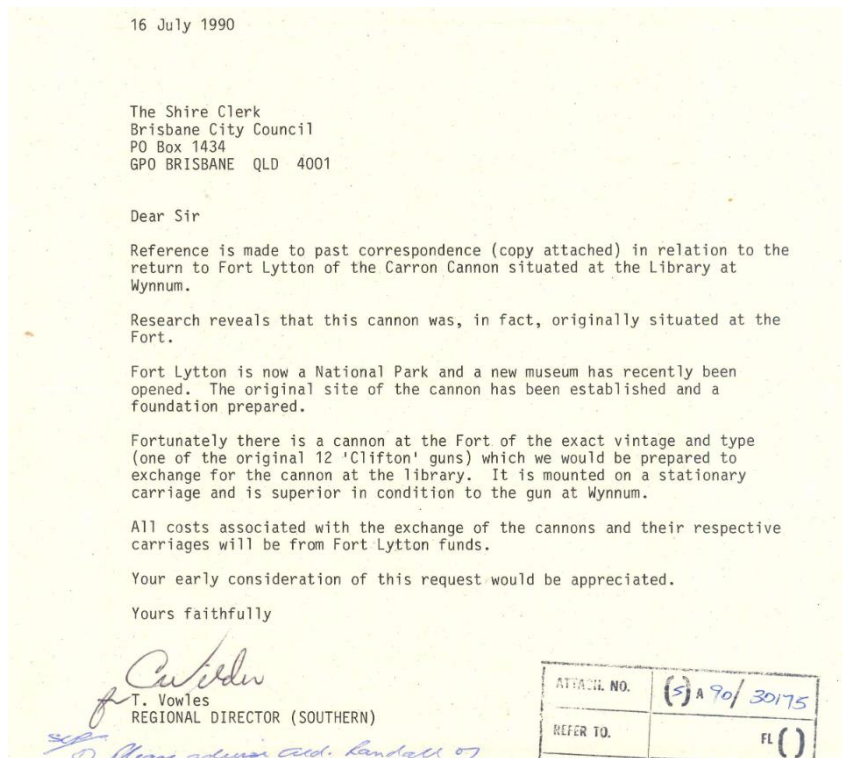


In 1981 60756 moved to Fort Lytton and in 1990 it played a starring role in the opening of the Fort Lytton Museum in April of that year.



Figure 16: Opening of the Fort Lytton Museum April 1990.

Queensland's Carron Cannon



An approach by the Queensland National Parks Dept to the Brisbane City Council on 16 July 1990 resulted in 60756 being moved to Wynnum Library in 1992 and replacing Carron 57972 which in turn was moved to the Fort Lytton National Park.

Figure 17: Letter from Brisbane City Council File BCA0275 relating to the Clifton Guns.

In 2008 60756 was moved to the Wynnum Civic Centre and a presentation plaque was unveiled by state member Paul Lucas.

Figure 18: Photo courtesy of Brisbane Images, Brisbane City Council image.

At some point the gun was moved to the front of the now demolished Customer Service Centre on the corner of Charlotte Street and Bay Terrace and was photographed there in 2010.

Figure 19: Wynnum Manly, Lota and Gumdale History Group photograph.



Following restoration in 2016, 60756 was moved from outside the Wynnum Library to the Wynnum Central State School a short distance away.

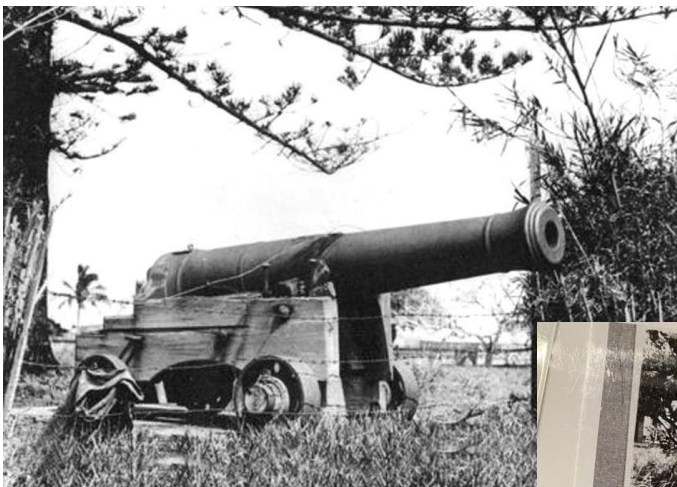
Queensland's Carron Cannon



Figure 20 & 21: 50756 as displayed in Wynnum Central Park, 2025, R. Finlay photograph.

5. Carron 63089 dated 1802.

Current location: St Helena National Park, St Helena Island Queensland.

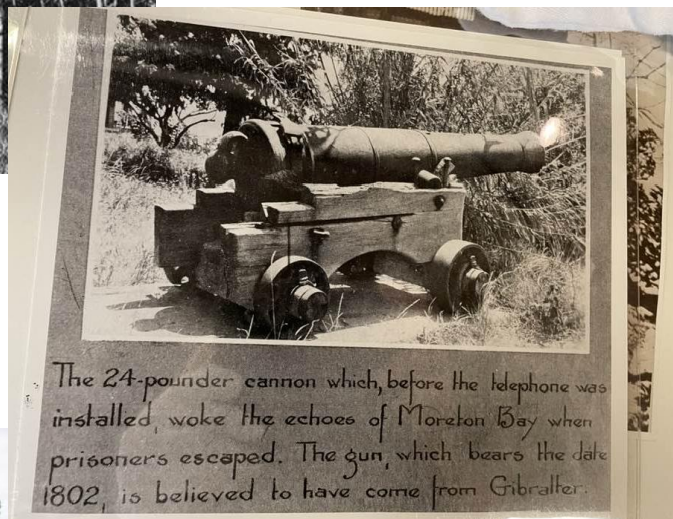


In 1867 this Carron cannon was moved to St Helena Penal Colony to be utilised as signal gun in case of escape by prisoners.

Figure 22: Signal gun on St Helena, c1928. State Library of Queensland photograph.

The prison closed in 1933 though the Carron cannon remained on the island in a derelict condition.

Figure 23: State Library of Queensland photograph.



The barrel and truck were removed from St Helena in 1953 to Gibson Park with T.S. Paluma and the Stafford Sea Cadets and preserved.

Figure 24: T.S. Paluma at Stafford with Carron cannon displayed; BCC Citation Photograph.

Queensland's Carron Cannon

The Brisbane City Council saw fit in 1982 to trade Carron cannon 63914, then in storage, for 63089, which was restored and returned to St Helena National Park.



Figure 25 & 26: 63089 as displayed at the St Helena National Park. R, Finlay photograph, 2025.

6. Carron 63107 dated 1802.

Current location: Laverack Barracks, Townsville, Queensland.



According to The Queenslander of 23 May 1885 this Carron cannon was sent to Townsville and then, according to the Brisbane Courier of 23 February 1886, to Bowen. By 1942 a Carron cannon is noted on display in Anzac Park on The Strand in Townsville

Figure 27: A family photograph dated to 1942. Source unknown.

And in 1975 it was photographed at Anzac Park alongside Carron 71242.

Figure 28: As displayed at Anzac Park, Townsville. Photograph source unknown.

It was moved to RHQ 4th Field Regiment at Lavarack Barracks in 1982. A plaque attached to this cannon states that the Carron cannon



Queensland's Carron Cannon

were refurbished in 2010 to commemorate the opening of the Chau Pha Lines on 4 December 2010. All attempts to obtain up to date photographs have failed.

Figure 29: 63107 outside RHQ 4th Field Regiment at Lavarack Barracks photo P F Building Company Pty Ltd.



7. Carron 63856 dated 1803.

Current location: Brisbane Sailing Squadron, Bulimba Queensland.

Figure 30: The Telegraph 12 October 1898.

In 1910 this Carron cannon was gifted to Brisbane City Council and after a short period of storage is noted on display in 1911 at Wilson's Lookout on Bowen Terrace overlooking Storey Bridge.

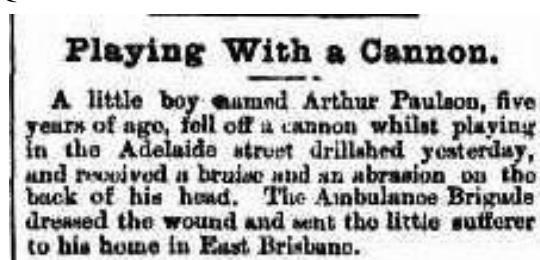


Figure 31: On display at Wilson's Lookout in 1938.

Following an approach by the Brisbane Sailing Squadron in 1964, the squadron received permission from the Brisbane City Council to remove the Carron gun and display it in Vic Lucas Park in an area alongside their clubhouse at Bulimba provided they maintained the it in good order and condition.

Figure 32: Overlooking the Brisbane River, Newstead, with the Story Bridge in the background 1960s (Bulimba District Historical Society photograph).



Queensland's Carron Cannon



The Carron gun had been moved from its riverside location by 1980 to the entrance of the Brisbane Sailing Squadron clubhouse. Due to the method of mounting the cannon on besser blocks, it is not possible to confirm the serial number of the cannon, though it can be safely assumed to be 63856.

Figure 33: Cannon on display at BSS clubhouse at Bulimba in 2024. Photograph from Bulimba District Historical society.

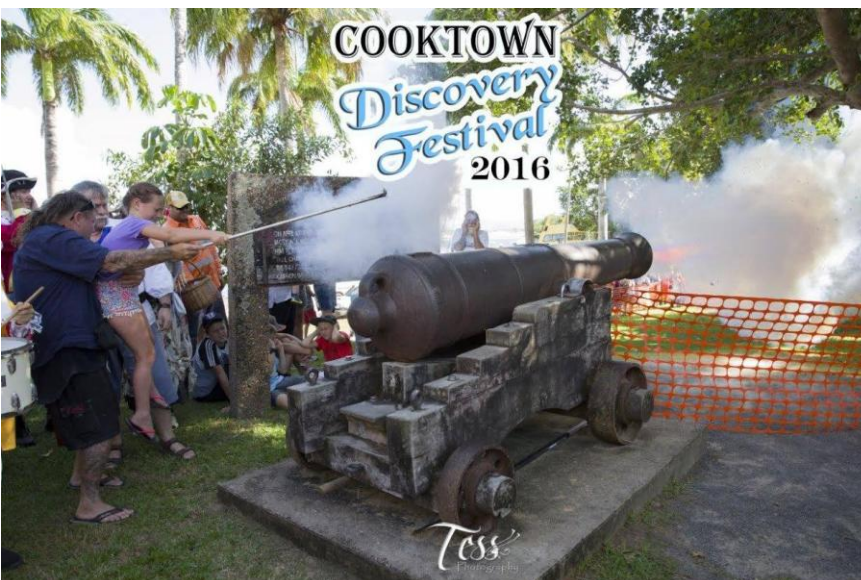
8. Carron 63911 dated 1803.

Current location: James Cook Monument, Charlotte Street, Cooktown Queensland.



This Carron cannon was sent to Cooktown in 1885 for local defence along with three cannon balls, two rifles and one officer, and was sited at Cannon Flat otherwise known as John Street Oval, from 1887 until 1939.

Figure 34: 63911 while displayed at Cannon Flat prior to 1939. QSA photograph.



In 1939, the cannon was moved to its present position near James Cook Monument on Charlotte Street overlooking Endeavour River. The cannon was fired on an annual basis as part of local celebrations on the anniversary of Cook's landing. The winner picked from a local competition was invited to fire the gun.

Figure 35: The last firing of 63911 in 2018. Cooktown Discovery Festival photograph.

Queensland's Carron Cannon



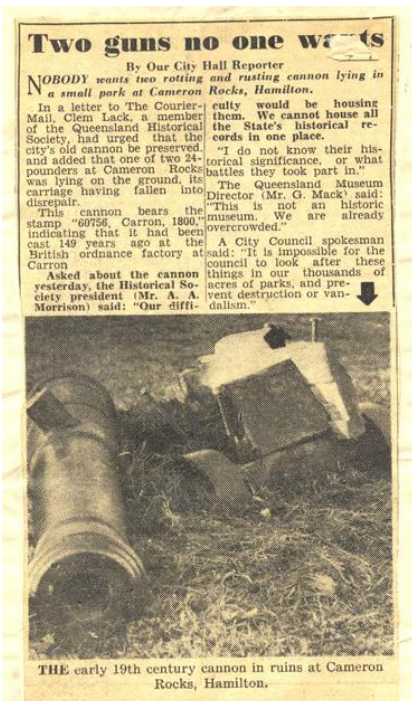
Due to a change in the administration of firearms legislation in Queensland, these annual firings ceased in 2018.

Figure 36: Currently on display. R. Finlay photograph, 2025.

9. Carron 63914 dated 1803.

Current location: Brisbane Botanical Gardens, Brisbane Queensland.

In 1909 this Carron cannon was gifted to the Brisbane City Council and was placed in storage until 1949 at which time it was moved to public display at Cameron Rocks Reserve. Brisbane City Council minutes noted in 1949 that the wooden carriages of the cannon in Cameron Rocks had deteriorated due to vandalism and decay leading to complaints to the BCC from the general public. The Parks superintendent stated that due to the possibility of the Harbours and Marine Department resuming the use of the site for wharves in the near future the cannon should be removed.



Illus 37: Extract from the Courier Mail of 13 September 1949.

By 1950 the two guns had been moved to BCC Crosby Park Nursery and were in storage. As a result of a submission by the Queensland Electricity Generating Board in 1954 requesting any cannon for display purposes, this cannon was moved to the grounds of the Gibson Island Power Station facing the Brisbane River.

Returned to the Brisbane City Council in 1982, it was swapped with Carron 63089, then in the possession of the Stafford Sea Cadets, which was in turn restored and returned to the St Helena National Park. The Stafford Sea Cadets re-located to Shorncliff

in 2007 and Carron 63914 was returned to Brisbane City Council and placed into storage. Restored once again in 2015, it was moved by Brisbane City Council to put in the restored saluting area in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens and is again on public display, complete with an interpretation board.

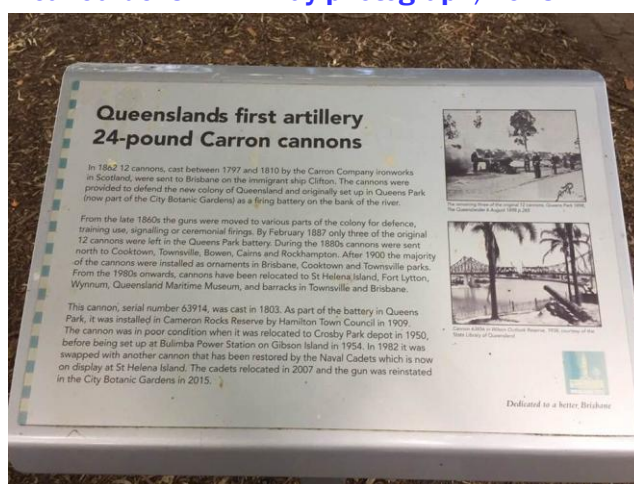
Queensland's Carron Cannon



Figure 38: As displayed in the Brisbane Botanical Gardens. R. Finlay photograph, 2025.

Figure 39: As displayed in Brisbane Botanical Gardens. Brisbane Botanic Treasures photograph.

Figure 40: Interpretation board displayed in Brisbane Botanical Gardens (Note the second photograph shows Carron 63856 currently displayed at Brisbane Sailing Squadron). R. Finlay photograph.



10. Carron 71242 dated 1807.

Current location: 4th Field Regiment RHQ, Lavarack Barracks.

This Carron cannon is noted as being sent to Townsville by The Queenslander published on 23 May 1885, and again by the Brisbane Courier on the 23 February 1886. Nothing further is known of the gun until 1942 when it was included in a family photograph in 1942. In 1975 the two Townsville Cannon were together again and mounted on concrete blocks in Anzac Park.



Figure 41: As displayed in Anzac Park Townsville. Photograph source unknown.

By 1981 both Carron cannon appear to have been moved to Lavarack Barracks RHQ 4th Field Regiment. All efforts thus far by the author to obtain current photographs of 71242 from the 4th Field Regiment and ADF

Queensland's Carron Cannon

have failed. The plaque attached to 71242 indicates the guns were restored and placed there on 9 May 1981 to commemorate the anniversary of reformation of the regiment in 1960.

11. Carron 76359 dated 1810.

Current location: Queensland Maritime Museum, Southbank, Queensland.

A 24-pounder. Story of the Carronade.

By DR. CUMBRAE STEWART.

I WAS told recently that a "carronade" was to be seen at the corner of Wickham-terrace and Albert-street, and lost no time in examining it. But it proved to be no "carronade," though made at Carron. It is a 24-pounder, mounted upon a decaying wooden gun carriage, which from the trucks, or wheels, fore and aft, appears to have been intended for a fort, and not for a ship's deck.

On the first reinforce of the gun is a broad arrow, which is not, as supposed by the ignorant, a mark of degradation, but a sign that it belonged to the King, a fact also proclaimed by the Royal cipher "G.R.3" entwined on the second reinforce. On the end of the right trunnion is "24, pr." and on the end of the left "76,330, Carron-1810." Can any one tell me how this old British gun, cast at Carron 117 years ago, came to rest in Wickham Park?

Carron stands on the right bank of the Carron River, about two miles from Falkirk, the birthplace of the late William Kidston. In the year 1760 it was a small and insignificant village, when it was chosen for the site for an iron foundry by a chartered company called the Carron Iron Company. One of the principal operations of the Carron Company was the casting of great guns for the Navy, and great gun of 1760 was, however, a very small gun as compared with the 68-pounder of 1800, and heavier guns of 1880, to say nothing of the monsters of the last war. The guns of the Endeavour, which have lain beneath the waves near Cooktown since 1770, were only six-pounders, and the broadside gun of the first raters of the time of Nelson were 18-pounders. The 24-pounders were too heavy to be used by ships for firing in numbers, but the guns had great advantages, and soon after their introduction, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, they were found on many ships, singly or in pairs.

The Brisbane Courier notes on 4 May 1866 that 76359 was moved to the Observatory on Wickham Terrace for use as a Time Gun, though the use of such a large cannon for time-gun duties quickly drew many complaints as a result of shattered windows, etc. Despite reducing the charges and changing the frequency of firings, consideration was given to moving the time gun to Mount Coottha, then known as One Tree Hill. The practice of firing the gun was ceased by 1891.

Figure 42: Brisbane Courier 19 November 1927 - 76359 is still at the Windmill site.



Figure 43: 76359 in its first position at the corner of Wickham Tce and Albert St. BCC photograph.



By 1950 the gun had been moved a short distance along Wickham Tce and was placed on public display in Wickham Park and appears to have been placed in at least two positions.

Figure 44: 76359 at second position further into Wickham Park. BCC photograph.

As a result of a submission by the Queensland Electricity Generating Board in 1954 requesting any cannon for display purposes, this Carron cannon was moved to the grounds of the Gibson Island

Queensland's Carron Cannon

Power Station facing the Brisbane River. It remained on display until 1986 when two of the Carron Clifton Cannons, 56719 and 76359, were handed over to Queensland Maritime Museum.

Figure 45: The 1986 presentation of two Carron cannon to the Queensland Maritime Museum. QMM photograph.



Figure 46: Queensland Maritime Museum photograph.

In 1987 it was moved to Queensland Maritime Museum and restored as a maritime cannon with wooden trucks instead of a cast iron garrison carriage – an option which makes sense for a Maritime Museum. It was ready in time for Expo 1988.



Figure 47: Recently restored and displayed with Carron 56719. QMM Photograph, 2025.



Figure 48: 76359 as displayed at QMM. QMM photograph.

12. Carron serial number unknown though possibly 71942, date manufactured possibly 1807.
Current location: Unknown.

In 1887, as reported in the Brisbane Courier on 22 February 1887, this Carron gun was apparently dispatched to Cairns, where it was initially displayed on the Cairns Esplanade essentially to form a Garrison Battery. The unit disbanded by 1894, and the gun was then displayed outside the Drill Hall

Queensland's Carron Cannon

in Luke Street. At some date its carriage become unserviceable, and by 1900 the cannon was apparently buried. By 1914 or earlier, the cannon was retrieved and apparently sold for scrap possibly to Japan. This action is yet to be confirmed.

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