



Eltham's Past Revealed



Preparations are made to lift the buried gun

A piece of Eltham's history was unearthed last week when an old field gun was discovered in Taumata Park.

The gun disappeared in 1938 and recent attempts to locate it were unsuccessful until the arrival of a visitor with a metal detector last week.

Efforts will now be made to restore the gun while the search continues for an explanation of why the gun was buried in the first place.

The man who found the gun Mr Carl Perham of Whakakane first heard about it when he was staying at the motor camp last month while on his way to New Plymouth for a wedding.

He visited the Borough Council offices and offered to help find the missing gun.

Searching in the trees at Taumata Park with his metal detector he discovered

a large object buried at the edge of the Waingongoro River chit.

At that stage he couldn't be sure what the object was and went on to New Plymouth for the wedding.

He returned last week and made a further search and reported to the council he may have found the missing gun.

Excavation

Excavation was carried out on the site and a large hub and wheel were located.

Further excavation found a complete large artillery piece buried on its side.

A suitable lifting machine was arranged to pull the gun out on Friday morning.

The event drew a lot of interest from local people, photographers, and a television film crew.

The gun is 4.7 metres long, 2.1 metres wide, 1.8 metres high and weighs about two tonnes. The bore is about 100mm (four inches).

It appears to have an oil operated recoil system and a recoil operated wheel braking system.

Search

Eltham Borough Councillor, Mr Don Drabble, has already been searching for the lost gun for nearly two years.

More than 18 months ago the question of a cannon which once stood at the base of the grandstand in Taumata Park was raised and Mr Drabble undertook to research the matter.

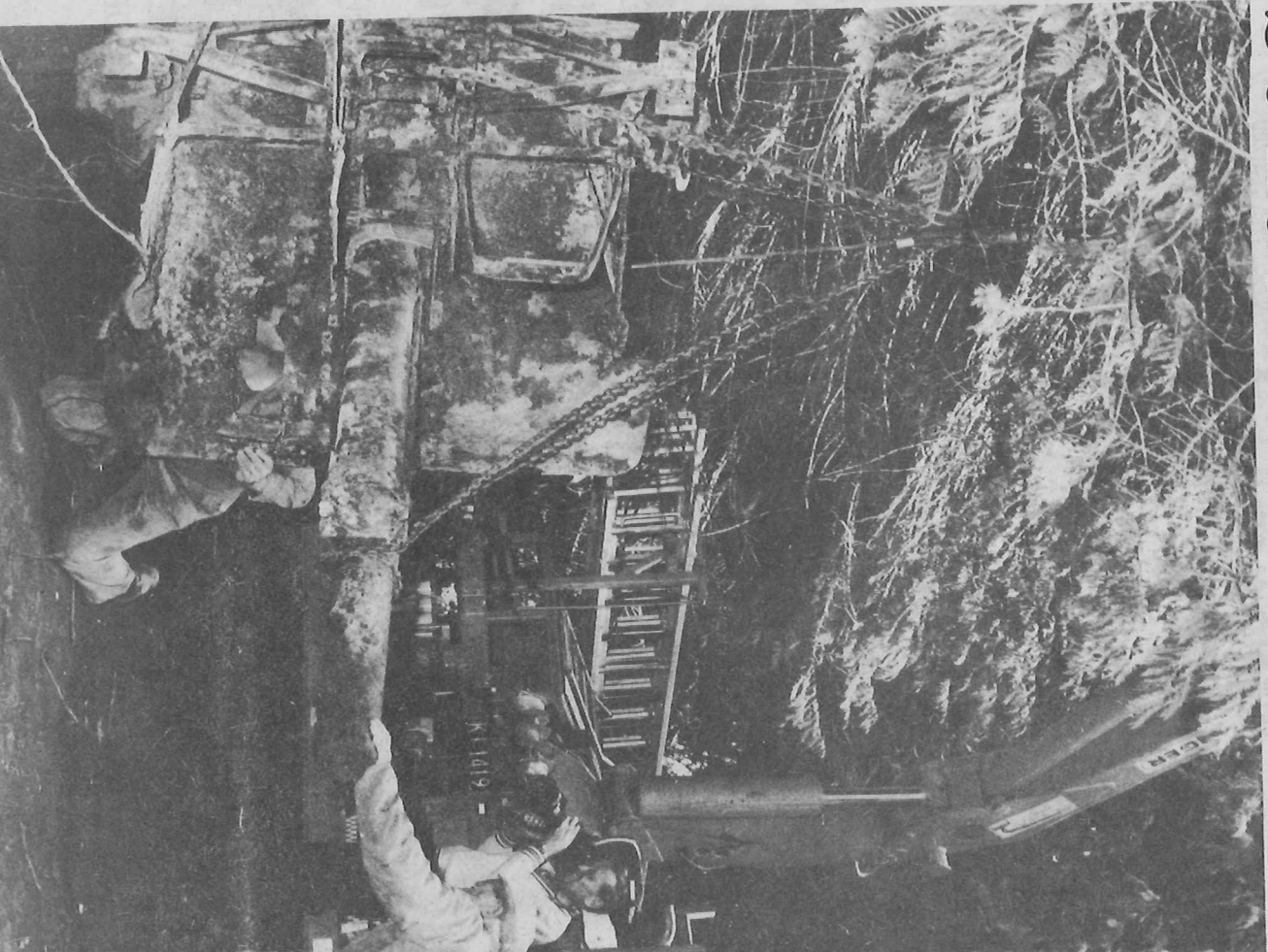
He contacted Mr Bert Stewart who was a caretaker at Taumata Park some years after the cannon had disappeared. Mr Stewart said the cannon was thought to have been buried behind the grandstand somewhere.

A search of early council minutes revealed that at a reserve committee meeting on Wednesday, November 9, 1938 a recommendation was made to Council.

"That the gun at Taumata Park be removed."

No other reference could be found and a metal detector was used without success.

Further inquiries were made but no leads were



The field gun gets a lift from its resting place for the past 45 years, with the television cameras there to record the event.

found and the matter lapsed until Mr Perham arrived.

Old Coins

Mr Perham has been interested in metal detecting for about ten years and has two metal detectors.

He began travelling around New Zealand with his wife about six years ago and wherever he goes he checks out old sports grounds looking for old coins.

He also does commercial work looking for lost valuables.

It appears the gun probably arrived in October 1920. A further search of council minutes revealed that at an ordinary meeting of the Council on Friday, June 25, 1920 a resolution was passed:

"That application be made to the defence authorities for a Field Gun for placing in the Domain." Bridger/Carmon.

Mr Drabble said the gun appeared to be in excellent condition considering its age. The wooden wheel spokes have disintegrated but the tyres are in excellent order.

Presently the gun is being sand blasted and restoration work in the wheels is being investigated.

It isn't known yet what will be done with the gun if it is restored.

One onlooker at the excavation jokingly suggested in view of the current land transfer dispute between the Eltham County and Borough Councils the Borough might set it up facing the County offices.

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Mr Carl Perham in action with the metal detector which found the missing gun.