

MAY JACKSON



May Jackson was a 2.5 Inch RML Screw Gun that was used in Central and Eastern Africa during the late 19th Century/ Early 20th Century. We've investigated her history because she is part of the Matabele War 1893, a war that we have designed a range of figures for.

A Screw Gun was a 2.5 Inch Rifled Muzzle Loading Seven Pounder Mountain Gun. It was brought into British Army service in 1880. It was designed to replace an earlier 7pdr Mountain Gun. Mountain Guns were developed to get artillery into inaccessible areas of the Empire. The screw gun was so named because the gun itself came in two parts that 'screwed' together when it was time to be deployed. The idea was to make it easier to be loaded onto Mules, or in emergencies carried by porters, into Mountains and other difficult terrain.

Our gun was named May Jackson by the British South Africa Policemen after a popular Barmaid from Salisbury, Rhodesia.

Her history begins in 1891. Cecil Rhodes' private army, the British South Africa Company, had entered Mashonaland (part of Modern Zimbabwe) in 1890 and established towns and forts there. The Gun was brought up from South Africa

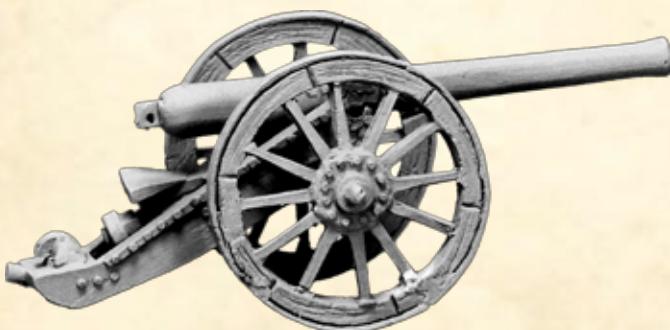


to Fort Victoria in 1891. In 1893, Rhodes planned to invade the neighbouring Matabeleland. A military column was raised in Fort Victoria for the invasion by Major Wilson, and the Gun joined them. Because of her small wheels, she went in the back of a wagon with a specially designed ramp. She was used in anger during the Battle of Bembesi, and was saved from the disaster of the Shangani patrol with Wilson because her wagon was not suitable for the quick moving force.

After the Matabele War, the BSAC guns went into storage. Not all of them fared well, famously one carriage was devoured by termites, but the Gun with new wheels accompanied the 1895 expedition into the Transvaal by the BSAC called the Jameson Raid. The raid failed, and the Gun was taken as booty by the Boers.

The Boers turned the Gun on the British in the Second Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902. She was recaptured by the British South Africa Police at the raising of the Siege of Kimberley.

The Gun remained in the possession of the BSA Police in Salisbury, receiving her name, May Jackson in this period and was used for training and ceremonial duties, firing a Salute to the Prince of Portugal in 1907.



When war with Germany broke out in 1914, May Jackson went north with the British forces to East Africa. At the siege of Saisi in what is now NE Zambia, she helped beat off large scale German attacks, knocking out an enemy gun with a direct hit on its muzzle. She continued to perform well, but didn't accompany forces moving into East Africa.

May Jackson was pulled back to a base at Kasama. In one of the last actions of WW1, Kasama was attacked by the Germans and overrun. May Jackson was captured, sabotaged and thrown over an escarpment.

After the war, one of the guns pre-war crewmen, Mr Jalland, now Provincial Commissioner, recovered May Jackson and displayed her outside the Government Offices at Kasama.

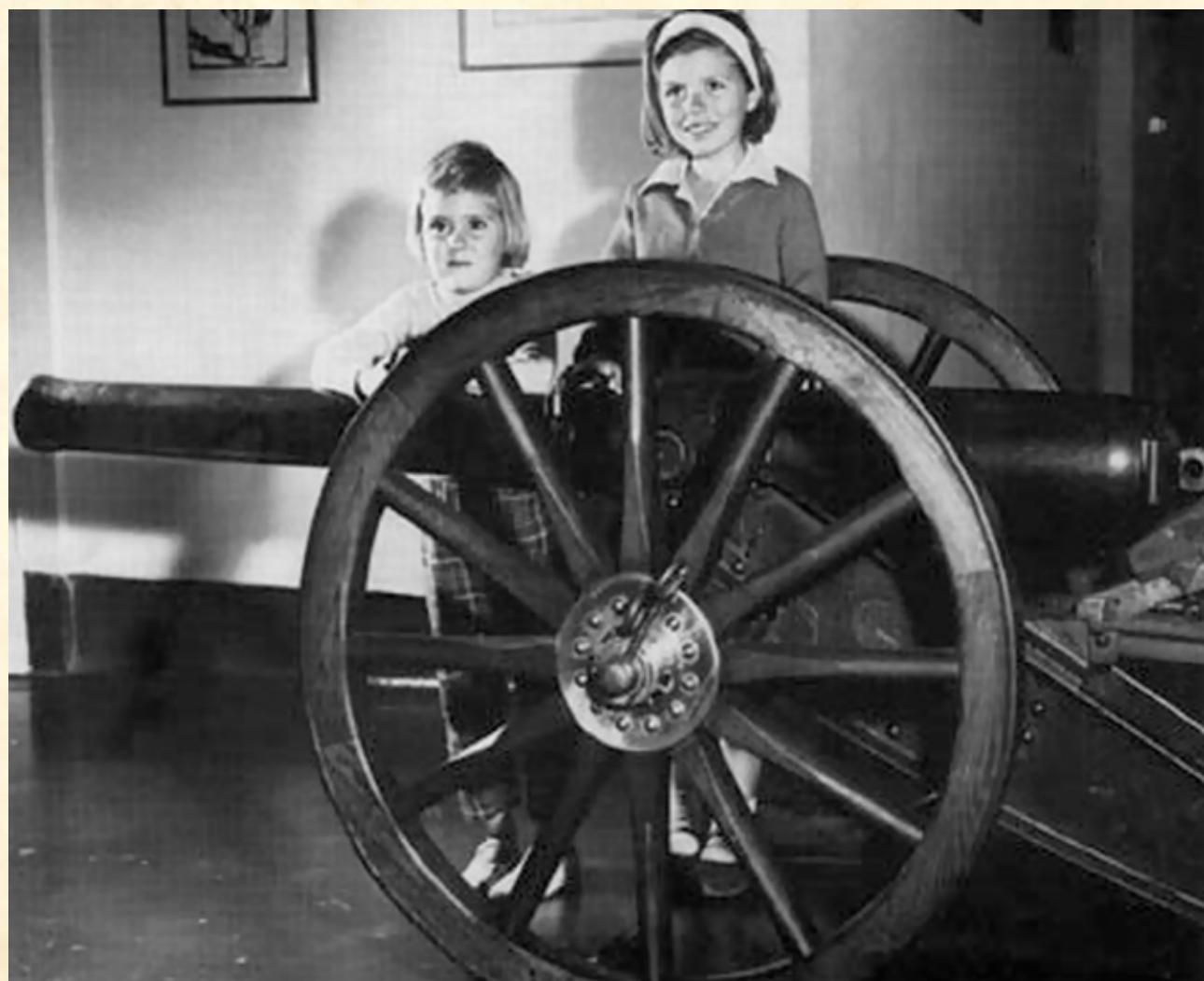
The gun was later cleaned and mounted on a replacement carriage and displayed at the Military and Police Museum in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia.

We have been very pleased to share the story of this remarkable gun's 25 year active service history with you. The question we can't answer is; is May Jackson still in the museum, over 120 years after she came to Africa?



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Two young visitors to the Police and Army Museums in Lusaka admire May Jackson, the seven-pounder mountain screw gun that has played a part in some of central Africa's most historic events.





Indian Army Screw Gun

Rudyard Kipling liked the Screw Gun

SCREW-GUNS

*Smokin' my pipe on the mountings, sniffin' the mornin' cool,
I walks in my old brown gaiters along o' my old brown mule,
With seventy gunners be'ind me, an' never a beggar forgets*

*It's only the pick of the Army
that handles the dear little pets -- 'Tss! 'Tss!*

*For you all love the screw-guns -- the screw-guns they all love
you!*

*So when we call round with a few guns,
o' course you will know what to do -- hoo! hoo!
Jest send in your Chief an' surrender --
it's worse if you fights or you runs:
You can go where you please, you can skid up the trees,
but you don't get away from the guns!*

*Smokin' my pipe on the mountings, sniffin' the mornin' cool,
I climbs in my old brown gaiters along o' my old brown mule.*

*The monkey can say what our road was --
the wild-goat 'e knows where we passed.
Stand easy, you long-eared old darlin's!
Out drag-ropes! With shrapnel! Hold fast -- 'Tss! 'Tss!
For you all love the screw-guns -- the screw-guns they all love
you!*

*So when we take tea with a few guns,
o' course you will know what to do -- hoo! hoo!
Jest send in your Chief an' surrender --
it's worse if you fights or you runs:
You may hide in the caves, they'll be only your graves,
but you can't get away from the guns!*



Indian Army Screw Gun