

large stone. Upon further investigation however, he realized he had accidentally stumbled across something else, which after much digging turned out to be an old cannon.

With considerable difficulty, the four men managed to extract their prize from its muddy resting place and secure it aboard the Otter. All during the return flight to Inuvik, the party was torn between excitement over their unusual find and fear that the floor of the plane might give way under the great weight of the cannon.

Back at Inuvik, James set to work with a burnishing tool, removing countless years of rust and corrosion from the gun's surface, and eventually, after considerable rubbing and scrubbing, an inscription began to emerge. An impression of these markings was made with a piece of paper and a pencil, which was forwarded to the British Admiralty for their assistance in determining the origin of the mysterious artifact.

Eventually they received a response from the Admiralty, which postulated that the gun probably originated on a British man-of-war (a heavily armed square-rigged war ship of wooden construction). They also sent along photos of this particular class of warship, showing how a gun of this type was likely mounted. They suggested that the cannon had probably somehow gone from the man-of-war, to a whaling or sealing vessel and finally to its resting place under the beach sand on Herschel Island.

Using the photographs provided by the British Admiralty as a guide, James set about building a suitable base on which to mount the "beast".

Interjecting a bit of humour, he mounted the ancient gun so that it was aimed directly at the edifice adjacent to the Sub-Division building — a local hotel, affectionately known as the "Zoo". Having secured the ancient cannon onto its new mounting, James approached the Zoo's proprietor, pointed out the ominous direction in which it was aimed, and jokingly suggested what fate might befall the beer parlour if he received any further complaints of rowdiness.

Sometime later, a further embellishment was added to the cannon displayed in front of the Sub-Division. It seems a good friend of James — Stuart Hodgins, Commissioner of the Northwest Territories — knew where he could get his hands on a number of old cannon balls of suitable size and vintage, which would make an attractive addition to the display. Once James had arranged the iron spheres in pyramid formation beside the cannon, the manager of the Zoo realized that along with the weapon, James now had the ammunition to make good on his light-hearted threat. For some reason, the once boisterous tavern suddenly became a paragon of propriety.

The presence of all these cannon balls arranged so proudly and tantalizingly alongside the formidable artillery piece in front of an RCMP building eventually proved to be an overwhelming temptation for some local pranksters. Imagine the reaction of the NCO i/c when he arrived one morning to find only a vacant patch of ground where the pile of shot had been and read the constable's form C-238 from the previous night's shift captioned: "THEFT OF THE SGT.'S (CANNON) BALLS." ■