

ANGLESEA CANNON MISSING



The Anglesea Barracks Sergeant's Mess is seeking a small wooden cannon that has an incredible history – even being taken to war zones.

Mess secretary, WO2 Michael Hinchey, said the HMAS Wagga Petty Officer's Mess first presented the wooden cannon to the Mess in 1956.

"This presentation commenced a tradition where the cannon would be liberated from the Mess for a fee which would go to Legacy," WO2 Hinchey said.

At times the cannon would be absent for many years, being taken around the world and even transferred to other ships for the return trip to Anglesea.

Now the cannon has disappeared and the Anglesea Barracks Sergeants Mess has begun a world-wide search to locate it.

"The cannon acquired a history which was known across the US, NZ, Canadian and Australian navies," WO2 Hinchey said.

"Whenever ships visited Hobart, attempts would be made to remove the cannon from the Sergeant's Mess."

Despite circumnavigating the globe on the USS Missouri and being taken underwater on HMAS Ovens, it was a trip under the North Pole in 1985 that saw the cannon enter into military history.

"The cannon was on board the USS Aspro, a nuclear submarine, on its voyage under the North Pole."

"The USS Aspro carried out an historical rendezvous with another nuclear submarine, the USS Queenfish, under the ice and the cannon was transferred to the Queenfish during that time."

As each liberation and transfer took place, small plaques were added to the base, with additional wooded bases being added as more space was needed.

"The bottom base is actually part of the decking of the USS Missouri," said WO2 Hinchey.

Not all the liberations were by the Navy, with the Red Berets Parachute Display team, an NZ MP unit and a RAAF unit possessing the cannon at some stage.

It was the HMAS Westralia who took the cannon to war on a tour of duty in the Persian Gulf in 1991. The cannon was later taken into Kuwait before being returned to Australia.

The cannon was taken to the Antarctic in 1995 and also did a tour of duty into East Timor on board HMAS Anzac in 1999.

"It was returned to the Sergeant's Mess shortly after and remained there for some time until it was noticed missing several years ago," WO2 Hinchey said.

"The history of this small wooded cannon is impressive and we would like to hear from anyone who can assist in returning it to the Mess – along with the donation for Legacy."

"We are hoping that it is on board a ship or perhaps sitting in a mess somewhere around the world. We do expect the search to go overseas."

WO2 Hinchey can be contacted at michael.hinchey@defence.gov.au