MEDIA RELEASE

22 January 2015

FORT SCRATCHLEY GUN TO FIRE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 100 YEARS

A gun capable of hitting a boat 4km from land will be fired today at Fort Scratchley for the first time in 100 years.

The Fort Scratchley Historical Society began the meticulous restoration of the Nordenfelt Gun 30 years ago, and has now completed the project after a $20,000 donation by Hunter Water to secure the remaining parts.

Installed in 1892 as a defence gun to protect Newcastle’s Harbour entrance, the Nordenfelt was last used in 1914 as the daily time gun before being taken to Sydney where it was stripped of its parts and left to rust for more than 70 years.

Fort Scratchley Historical Society President Frank Carter said that the restored Nordenfelt is the only working gun of its type anywhere in Australia.

“When the Historical Society formed in 1982, the members started looking for items that belonged to Fort Scratchley including the Nordenfelt Gun. Thanks to funding from Hunter Water, Fort Scratchley is now the only place in Australia where the public can witness the regular firing of six historic guns.

“The Nordenfelt has been returned to its underground chamber looking out across Nobbys and the Harbour, just as it was in 1892. We expect that firing the gun will create a vibration of force and percussion of sound that will reverberate right around the headland. With a bit of luck it might even scare away that pesky great white that has been hanging around local beaches!

“This is an exciting moment for all Novocastrians, marking the end of a thirty year journey to have an important piece of Newcastle’s history returned home and then restored,” said Mr Carter.

Hunter Water Managing Director Kim Wood said that as a business that is almost as old as Fort Scratchley, the water utility chose to support the project as a way of honouring the City’s past.

“Fort Scratchley is intrinsically Novocastrian and recognised as such locally and overseas. Its historical importance has grown to the point that it now attracts more than 80,000 tourists and students annually.

“The Fort Scratchley Historical Society are an incredible group of volunteers. This group of largely retirees are at the Fort rain, hail or shine, educating the community about Newcastle’s military past and promoting its potential to tens of thousands of domestic and international travellers,” said Mr Wood.

The public will have the opportunity to experience the firing of the Nordenfelt Gun at the Fort Scratchley Open Day on Australia Day when six historic guns including the Nordenfelt will be fired in succession at 11am, 1pm and 3pm. The site will be open from 10am to 4pm, with free entry for the day.

MEDIA ALERT: MEDIA ARE INVITED TO CAPTURE THE FIRING OF THE NORDENFELT GUN THIS THURSDAY 22 JANUARY, 11.20AM FOR 11.30AM, FORT SCRATCHLEY

Jeremy Bath | 0419 267 789 | jeremy.bath@hunterwater.com.au