

The Russian Gun was once a familiar sight on the seafront opposite Pelham Place and a recent enquiry led to a search on the British Newspaper Archive for its history. The following is an extract of correspondence from 1942 when it was agreed to sacrifice the gunmetal for the war effort. [excuse any misprints, the BNA transcription is quite erratic]

Exhibition now - **MAPS**
Old Town Carnival Week
3rd to 11th August

14.2.1942

The Russian Gun Sir. —Having been born in Wellington-square during the siege of Sebastopol the Crimea War, I cannot help metaphorically shedding a tear at the pictures of the above named gun of the moving of which you show on the front page of your last Issue. Albeit In common with everyone In the Cinque Ports, I am right glad that that gun metal once again to be somehow used (at great effect we hope) against the enemy of the Russian people, now being fortunately our ally; But please, It Is realty Important for future correct local topography that the exact site for over 70 years of the Russian gun should be correctly reported and recorded, which is not the case In the account given on the 7th.

There stood quite close to the sea (and may so stand now) block of tallish houses called Beach-terrace, made up of some small but nice well-kept apartment houses which had no back entrances, in the middle of which there was a hall used for religious meetings. This block was so placed not to Interrupt the direct south sea view from Breeds-place. Close to the east side of Beach terrace, Its proper stone escarpment, facing due south to the sea (Into which It was sometimes fired) was placed the Russian gun. and near It was a stand from which were be sold shells, etc., under the care of an elderly dame, who did good business unless the sea was too rough, and then she fled. The back wheels of the gun carriage pointed exactly up the short road which climbs Pelham-crescent to the Church of Mary-in-the-Castle; that to say that the gun stood (and that for over 70 years) a good hundred yards west of the Marine Hotel on the site of which the Hippodrome music hall was later erected, which I gather from your paper is now the Cinema de Luxe. My elder sister (Miss Gabb) tells me that she watched the firing of the gun from the Castle gardens, just above It. Other details occur to us both, but I add more knowing well your limited space. May the gun metal help the great victory that will most surely be finally ours and dictated Iron Berlin. C. B. GABB. Tunbridge Wells. February 10th. 1942.

In the following weeks paper was this:

28,2,1942

The Russian Gun Sir, —It is always a pleasure to me to read the interesting letters Mr. C. B. Gabb sends to you from time to time. His note on this matter of the gun In your issue of the 14th Inst, was quite up to his usual standard. I enjoyed his description of Beach-terrace, which, of course, no longer exists This reminds me that the place of worship he mentions there was one time ministered to by William Booth. I well 'remember the family holding meetings In the open air In the summer time, just outside the hall. William and Catherine Booth and family at that time resided in Plyllimon-road. not many doors from my own home. There Is one Item In Mr, Gabb's letter which I fancy is not quite correct. He says, "The back wheels of the gun carriage pointed exactly up the short road which climbs Pelham-crescent to the church, etc." Most certainly there still Is road described, though is located the west end the wine vaults of Ellis, Son and Vidler.

Facing the back wheels of the gun carriage there was. and I believe still is, a flight of steps up to the crescent. May I, through you, sir, congratulate and thank Mr. Gabb for his many most Interesting letters on Hastings . NICHOLAS HARVEY. Purbrook, Hants.

By this time the gun had been moved up to the Museum for some years. They also found on the pile ready for scrap some Sussex made cannon dumped by Major Banbury [formerly of Sheffield Park] who was happy for the Museum to keep his cannon for their collection.

