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F Battlefield Casualty: The Archaeology of a Captured Gun

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Source: [Journal of Conflict Archaeology](#), Volume 5, Number 1, 2009 , pp. 231-256(26)

Publisher: [Maney Publishing](#)

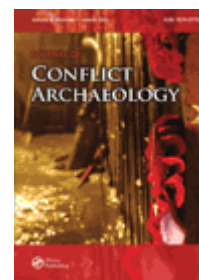
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Abstract:

Many artefacts in museums lack adequate information about the context from which they were collected. Not surprisingly, this often applies to artefacts recovered from battlefields, where chaotic conditions can result in uncertainty about their origins. This paper examines the case of a Second World War German 88 mm gun preserved in an Australian museum. The museum had little contextual information for this weapon, except that the Australian Army captured it in North Africa in 1942, probably after the Second Battle of El Alamein. However, an archaeological analysis of the gun, particularly of damage incurred during battle, can link it to photographs taken after the battle and re-establish its historical context and the circumstances of its acquisition. In this way, a museum artefact can become more than a mere exhibit: it can be made to document its own past.

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Document Type: Research article

DOI: 10.1163/157407709X12634580640579

Publication date: 2009-06-01

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