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HISTORICAL ARTEFACTS SALVAGED AT WATERFRONT

Historical artefacts dating back to the 1800s have been salvaged during dredging at the Darwin Waterfront and Convention Centre site.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said the items will be preserved as an important part of Darwin's history.

"It's been a real bonus of this development that we've been able to unearth some of the lost historical secrets buried beneath the mudflats," Ms Martin said.

It is always our top priority to strike a careful balance between development, and the benefits it brings, and the preservation of our history," Ms Martin said

"The finds reflect our city's diverse and fascinating past – an Aboriginal spear, cannon balls, gun shells, equipment from ships and a wood working tool used to build jetties.

"The items span at least a century of settlement in Darwin from Aboriginal occupation to the first European settlement, the early years of goldmining and the Second World War.

"They will all be preserved and eventually put on public display to provide a fascinating glimpse of the varied maritime history of the Waterfront area.

"I'd like to thank the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts for its work in identifying and preserving these artefacts," Ms Martin said.

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Recent Finds at the Waterfront

Spear

- Most likely to be Aboriginal in origin and made of hard wood, probably iron wood.
- Manufactured using an iron tool so likely to be less than 150 years old.
- Probably used for hunting of large marine animals such as dugong.

Cannon balls

- Known as 12 pound mortars, they are 4.5 inches in diameter and were stored with brass plugs in the fuse holes.
- This type of mortar dates from the early- to mid-1800s but may date back as early as the 1700s.
- Given these cannonballs were found without a powder charge and with their storage plug intact these were unlikely to have been fired.
- The most likely explanation for their arrival in the harbour was as ballast on a ship.

Armstrong shell

- Most likely from an Armstrong rifled muzzle loaded gun which is of British manufacture and was widely produced in different calibres from the 1860s.
- The three rows of small copper studs on the side of the shell slotted into the rifling in the muzzle.

Quadrantal sphere

- A 'quadrantal sphere' is associated with a ships compass – one was mounted on either side of the compass as correction mechanisms to compensate for the difference between 'true north' and 'magnetic north' and to compensate for the influence on a compass reading for any iron used in the ship's construction.

Pulley Block

- General purpose equipment which may originate from either a boat or wharf.
- The wheel of this pulley is not grooved so it was more likely used for rope rather than chain.

Adze head

- This is a wood working tool commonly used during construction of the Pine Creek to Katherine rail extension from 1912-1918.
- It may also have been used for shaping the wood for one of the many jetties built over time at the Darwin waterfront.