

WASC 284  
WAI 77

Letter re Woolwich  
Infants & ILN  
Engraving/Article





*The War Office*

ROYAL  
 ARMAMENT RESEARCH AND  
 DEVELOPMENT ESTABLISHMENT  
 Fort Halstead, SEVENOAKS, Kent  
 Telephone: Sevenoaks 55211, ext. 474

Please address any reply to  
 THE DIRECTOR  
 and quote: FCR/363/01  
 Your reference:

11th February, 1964.

Mr. McLaren,  
 Information Section,  
 E.R.D.E.,  
 Waltham Abbey,  
 Essex.

Dear Mr. McLaren,

..... Here is a copy of the photograph of the  
 "Woolwich infants" for your retention. The article on  
 "The Swan Song of the Big Gun" in the Fort, No. 3, is  
 undoubtedly Unclassified - the security grading is  
 given in the Contents on page i.

The original of the photograph of the Woolwich  
 infants was engraved and published in the Illustrated  
 London News in 1874.

Yours sincerely,

(C. L. JARRETT)

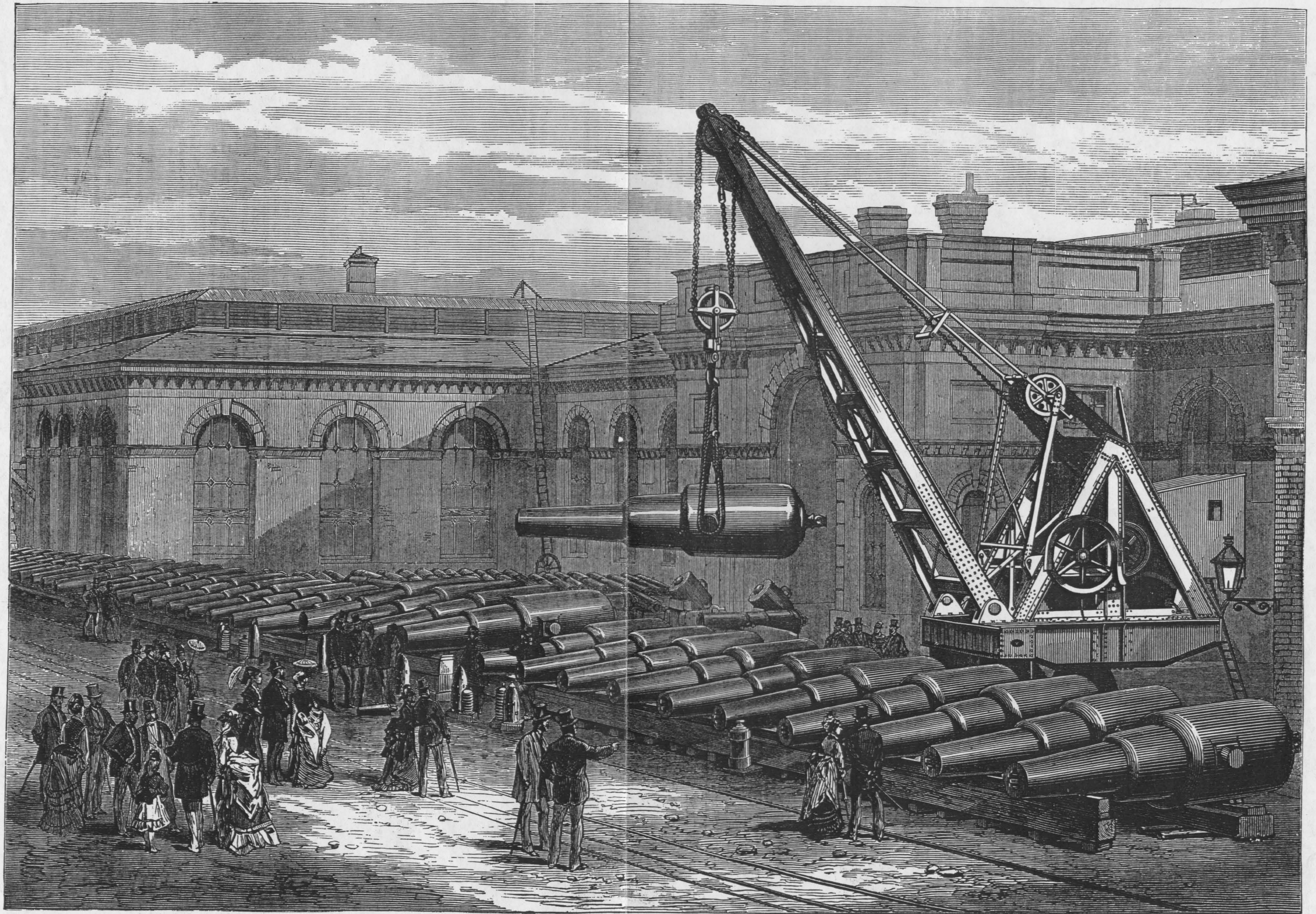
## THE WOOLWICH INFANT SCHOOL.

The big gun that was built at Woolwich Arsenal for her Majesty's ship *Devastation* was called "the Woolwich Infant" by way of a joke upon its size. Its parents could not, indeed, have pleaded in their excuse as a young mother is said to have pleaded for her babe—that it was "only a little one;" but a fault it certainly was, for the experimental discharges cracked this mighty piece of ordnance in a most decisive manner. When we think of the explosion of a cartridge 2ft. 6 in. long, with 130 lb. of powder, to throw a 700 lb. shot from a tube 12 in. in diameter (a great bore, isn't it?), we must see it is a rather forcible proceeding. Upon such an occasion the interior surface of the gun has to suffer a pressure in some parts of more than 60 tons upon the square inch, which few infants could endure without bursting. Not much blame, therefore, is due to the original bantling of Woolwich Arsenal, which was recast in a better form; but the great guns of more recent construction, weighing likewise 35 tons each, are designed to endure a more severe ordeal of their strength. When the Emperor of Russia visited Woolwich, a few weeks ago, one of the sights offered to his inspection was the assemblage of fifty guns, large and small, which some facetious officer has called "the Infant School." The very large one, suspended from the crane, is even bigger than those we have mentioned, its weight being 38 tons. Four 35-ton guns are placed in the middle of the row; the others are twenty-five guns weighing twenty-five tons each, and a score of those weighing 20 tons each. Shot and cartridges belonging to the largest guns are placed on the ground near their muzzles. At the feet of the gentlemen who stand looking upon this display of gigantic artillery weapons lies one of the small mountain-guns of steel, throwing a 7-lb. shot or shell, invented for the Abyssinian War, and lately used against the Ashantees. Its length is about 3 ft., and it may be carried with ease by two men, slinging it on a pole, or it may travel on the back of a mule; the gun-carriage forms a separate load. This miniature ordnance will be quite as useful, in its way, as the mightiest cannon in the Queen's naval or military garrison service. Our Illustration is from a photograph by Mr. H. Baden Pritchard, of the War Office photographic department.

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THE "INFANT SCHOOL" AT WOOLWICH ARSENAL, AS SEEN BY THE CZAR.