

Some background history to research and development
for the restoration project

This all started from a question put to us in 2003 by Niall O'Donoghue. Could we (Doug and Sylvia) try and find original construction plans for the Tower ?

(At the time, it was hard even to find the footprint of the Tower and Battery on the ground due to the general dilapidation ,completely overgrown nature of the site and general neglect caused by use as a Council waste dumping ground !)

Consequently we visited the National Archives in Kew on numerous occasions, hours and sometime days spent to try and find them.

This involved becoming members, searching through indexes, finding possible references and ordering files for examination, a time consuming process.

When appropriate documents were found, we then obtained copies and sent them to Niall.

Uncovering the required plans has so far not been possible but along the way, we found a mine of historical information including drawings and etchings of Towers and Batteries along the South County Dublin coast. Additionally there were numerous box files containing correspondence and reports.

We accumulated a comprehensive collection of information, mainly from Kew and in addition we also visited the British Library, British Museum, Royal Engineers Museum, the restored Martello Tower in Dymchurch and Irish Military records.

When Niall had decided to restore the Tower, we were instrumental in sourcing a foundry in the UK to cast an exact replica of a George Third Blomfeld cannon and obtained permission to take exact measurements from an original in Fort Nelson.

Additionally, we located a Company in the South West of England that was able to manufacture the gun carriage, they having made similar constructions for historic sites in England.

All this would not have been possible without our introduction to Martin Bibbings of the Trafalgar Gun Company who arranged for the casting and proofing of the cannon and production of the traversing carriage.

He also supervised the first and subsequent firings of the cannon, assisted by members of the Shrapnel Battery, a re-enactment group from the U.K. who had carried out similar engagements in Gibraltar and at re-enactments of the Battle of Waterloo.

They provided an introduction to the Irish re-enactment group the Connaught Rangers who have assisted Niall in several events at the Tower in full period costumes,armed with their replica Brown Bess muskets.

During our searches, we located a previously undiscovered map of the proposed defences for Killiney Bay , prepared by the French Major la Chaussee who was working for the British. This formed part of a written report submitted by him and greatly assisted in understanding the rationale for the locations of Towers and Batteries

We were also very lucky in finding the renowned Irish Military historian and architect Paul Kerrigan, who is unfortunately now deceased.He had a comprehensive knowledge of Forts and Fortifications in Ireland and was of great assistance to the project.

He regularly contributed to the Irish historical military magazine An Cosantoir.

Together with Paul we visited Fort Amherst in Chatham, one of the best preserved Victorian military complexes in England.

With the substantial renovation of Tower No.7, it was suggested by the Fortress Study Group from the U.K that submission for a Europa Nostra award would be appropriate.

We therefore in conjunction with Pol O'Duibhir assisted in the preparation of this and although Niall did not get an award as such, his entry was shortlisted and selected for special mention by the jury in 2014. Maybe a well deserved blue plaque will be forthcoming.

Tower No.7 is now described as fully restored which is correct. However, there are still three cannon and traversing carriages required for the Battery and to complete the original specification, maybe a chimney and signalling mast on the crown of the Tower would add more authenticity.

Further research and work

- 1) Why would a French Major be in assisting the British in the defence of Ireland against a possible French invasion in Napoleonic times ?
From our researches so far, we are led to believe that he was a French Royalist who was employed by Philip d'Auvergne the British master spy in Jersey who was acting as Paymaster to the French exiles. Precisely how he came to be advising on the location of defensive emplacements in the bay needs further study.
From our researches so far, we know he had escaped the French Revolution and was active in the Royalist cause.
- 2) Who were the military unit garrisoning the Tower and Battery in the early 1800s? Were they all British or were they Irish Fencibles under the command of a British Officer? One of the cannons in the Battery and the cannon on the top of the Tower were capable of firing inland as well as to seaward which suggests that if the French had invaded, there might have been some assistance provided by the Irish
- 3) The possibility that the gunpowder magazine in the grounds of the Gunner's Cottage will be restored is an ongoing project. Paul Kerrigan previously attended at this construction and carried out a comprehensive survey.
- 4) Was there a water well in the site? There is evidence of a water tank within the Tower which we believe would have collected rainwater from the roof. This source would have been invaluable in the event of a prolonged siege of the Tower.
- 5) Are there any original plans for construction of the Tower and Battery ?

This last point which was the subject of the original question from Niall is still outstanding but along the way in our research, we have had a lot of fun and learned an awful lot.

