

## Military Reconnaissance of Killiney Bay

### General

Chapter 1 Killiney Bay is enclosed on the one side by the headland of Dalkey and on the other by the high head of Bray, near which stands the village of Bray and the little river Dargle which washes its walls. The direction of the bay runs North-West and South-East, and over a distance of (about ( ) ) in a straight line.

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### The Coast

Chapter 2 Along the greater part of its length, the coastline is bordered by cliffs, varying from an average height of 30 to 70 feet above sea level. However these cliffs occasionally fall away completely, as can be seen on the map,

1. between the foot of the obelisk mountain and the lime-kiln, over a space of 300 yards.
2. at the mouth of the stream which runs across the brow of the camp over a space of 400 yards
3. at the mouth of the little Dargle river which runs into the sea near Bray village, over a space of 600 yards and from there to the mountain of Bray Head.

At high water, the sea washes the foot of these cliffs, but at low water it exposes a fairly big stretch of shore composed of fine sand. The width of this stretch varies with the depth (of the sea bed) and the height of the tides.

Where there are cliffs, these are often broken by ramps erected for their convenience by local residents, or by cuttings caused by the continual flow of little streams or rivulets which flow into the sea.

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Inland

Chapter 3 To make this description as clear and as methodical as possible, I will divide the bay into three main sections. These sections immediately strike one on inspecting the area;

1. this runs from the obelisk mountain to the little screen which is topped by the grove of Fair View castle (house?)
2. this runs from the little screen to Bray village
3. this is enclosed between that village and Bray Head mountain.

The first of these sections forms a basin, not very open, and quite steep on the obelisk side. However it opens up according as it loses height, and becomes about 14 to 1500 yards wide at its lowest point. Beyond the stream the land rises again in a gentle slope as far as Fair View grove, this being the highest part, and that which borders it on the south side.

This first section contains some castles (?), Farms and very dispersed houses. It is generally uninterrupted by hedges or ditches and at the bottom of the basin there are some avenues of trees and woods (plain:unmanned?).

The land from the obelisk down to the stream is, for the greater part, dotted with large rounded rocks, which are not present however in sufficient quantity to inhibit access, particularly after passing Sherard's House.

The second section, between Fair View wood and Bray village, is made up entirely of two fairly regular slopes, the summit of which is about 5 to 700 yards from the sea. The first of these slopes towards the sea in a very gentle incline, and the second, a little steeper, towards the Bray to Dublin highway.

The first of these slopes, that towards the sea, is fairly open, but it is nonetheless crossed by some ditches, ravines and hedges, all of which are either parallel with or at right angles to the coast.

The second slope, namely all that portion between the summit and the highway, is broken by a considerable number of ditches, land rises, dry and wet ditches, streams &c, all of which make communication and access very difficult.

There are nevertheless some paths linking the highway with the sea, such as for example, those at Fair View, Cork Farm, Mr Webbs house, Mr Jones's and the path along the bank of the Dargle.

The first section has also many access ways from the road to the sea, that from the foot of the obelisk (mountain) to the lime-kiln which is however quite steep, that near the stream, and a third which leads to the path to the camp.

On the other side of the road in the second section, the land rises in an amphitheatre as far as the mountains. It is the chain of these mountains which forms the basin, the width of which varies with the different sections,

The third section, between Bray village and the foot of the mountain called Bray Head, is fairly regular. The coast is low on the seaward side and it rises in the form of a crater, the centre of which is occupied by a fairly large castle, surrounded by trees and walls.

That part of it in the basin is broken by some hedges and ditches, and much of it is crossed by a (low?) stone wall which is almost parallel to the shore.

### Deployment of Forces

Chapter 4 A general commanding an army on the defensive can achieve his object in a number of different ways, depending on the size of his force and how it is divided between branches of infantry, artillery and cavalry; on his knowledge of their worth - namely if they are accustomed to battle or not - and of the nature of the countryside in which he is operating.

Consequently he will either wish to commit himself to an all out defence, or alternately, he will only risk an engagement after making preparations so as to get the greatest possible advantage which his art combined with the nature of the terrain will allow. Thus the force which his art will seek to add to the natural position must be a function both of his objective and the means at his disposal. And it is usually for want of having considered the matter from this realistic point of view that people have successively criticised and eulogised different methods of fortifying a position in the course of a campaign.

There are reputable authorities on both sides this controversy. I will not attempt to settle the matter here and so avoid being delayed in the course of action which is laid out for me and which I must follow.

#### Modifications to be made to the coastline

- Chapter 5.
1. position batteries to cover the sea and defend the approaches from the shore; even if these are not sufficient to prevent disembarcation, the loss they will occasion to the enemy will mean that much less to be contended with when he lands. Moreover, if obliged to abandon them they can be rendered useless by breaking up the gun carriages and spiking the cannon.
  2. set up in the fissures in the cliffs; these often provide recesses or shoulders behind which can be hidden 12 pounders or howitzers, not to be fired until the very moment when the enemy start getting out of their launches. I think that these flanking batteries would cause chaos among the enemy as they could not be fired upon from the ships due to the presence of the enemy's own troops in the line of fire.
  3. escarp all the slopes and ravines which leave openings in the cliff in order to reduce to a minimum those points where the enemy can get through, and in this way keep him longer exposed to the raking fire, should he disembark in front of the cliffs.

These various precautions could be made in advance.

#### Inland modifications

- Chapter 6.
1. cut and destroy, both in the obelisk basin and on the slope towards the sea between Fair View, Bray and beyond, all the hedges ditches and ravines, which are parallel to the shore and so give the enemy cover and allow him to advance unnoticed.
  2. if the time and means available do not permit their complete destruction, a number of passages should be made in the hedges and ditches &c at right angles to the shore in order to give free and easy access to the troops charging the enemy.
  3. fell the woods at the bottom of the basin, those in front of the old castle and the country houses of Messers Dolts, Towsand, Fair View, Cork Farm, Webb, Jones, and Rowley.

4. entrench the country houses of Messers Dolts and Towsand; these two positions would be supported and protected by cannons which could be placed in the numerous positions on the lip of the basin, at the bottom of which these houses are situated. In the event of these having to be abandoned, withdrawal would be quite simple.

entrench also the houses of Fair View, and Messers Webb, Jones and Rowley; these are surrounded by trees suitable for the purpose. They would protect, and be protected by, the temporary works suggested on the map. The castle beyond Bray would make a good position.

5. maintain openings in the hedges and ditches which border the highway in order to give easy access and avoid having to pass in front of the enemy.
6. I have not yet mentioned the basins and terrain of the little slope whose summit stretches from Fair View grove to Bray. The part between the slope and the highway is cut and crossed by a large number of hedges and wet or dry ditches which would enable us to wage a mini-war on the enemy if he succeeded in pushing us back from the terrain in front. We would need to ensure good access and also make easier those ways which exist already such as those at Fair View, Cork Farm, Webb's, Jones's and the Dargle valley.
7. set up turnpikes (?) at the top of these paths to deny the enemy entry for as long as possible should he try to penetrate the defences at any one of these points.

I have made no reference in this memorandum to the fleches (?) and batteries which could be built to fortify the position without interfering with the general's plan of action or stopping or hindering the movement of his troupes. A glance at the map will show these emplacements more clearly than I could explain in words.

N<sup>a</sup> to effect these various works it will be necessary to be supplied with pick-axes, axes, hatchets and steel shovels (?) for moving and digging the earth which is quite easily worked in this area.

Dublin 11th February 1797

Major La Chaussée

SUMMARY

copy of the order from  
H E Lord Carhampton  
Commander in Chief

1.

give the actual strength of the  
troops encamped

2.

where best to draw them up for the  
purpose of attacking an enemy  
attempting to debark.

The three most probable points for  
the enemy to attempt a landing are  
those where the cliffs fall away  
completely and offer him maximum access.  
Now it so happens that along the whole  
length of the bay on the seaward side  
of the highway and on the highway itself  
there are hollows or shoulders which  
will take troops, even cavalry, effectively  
hiding them from the attacking vessels.

Moreover this bay offers a unique  
advantage to the defense. As it runs  
practically in a straight line, it  
deprives the enemy of the opportunity  
of pushing out from the centre towards  
the perimeter; thus, the troops despatched  
to meet them will hardly ever need  
to cover more ground than the enemy  
himself.

3.

examine the ground between the  
road and the beach

See chapters 1. and 2. of this memo

4.

with a view of removing  
obstructions in the course of  
24 hours so as to enable  
cavalry to act, who may be hid  
and covered in the valley  
leading from the camp to the  
beach.

See chapter 6 of this memo. Apart  
from the valley that leads from the  
camp to the shore, and which can hide  
the cavalry to great advantage, there  
is also cover along the highway where  
the cavalry could wait to be deployed.

5.

to mark out the ground where fleches might be quickly thrown up in order to strengthen the positions and support the batteries

See the map. These have been reduced to the smallest possible number. Their positioning allows them to command the full field of the terrain in front of them and to cross fire. They support, and are supported in turn by, their approach positions. I would propose initially not to make them too long in front so as to have enough time to adapt them to take cannon; they could be extended later if sufficient time remained.

6.

to take notice of such trees & hedges as would instantly make fascines, or large enough for habatias

These trees are marked on the map; i.e. those at the bottom of the obelisk basin and the country houses of Fair View, Messers (Noll), Towsand, Dolts, Webb, Jones and Rowley. Fascines could be made from the same branches and also from the hedge wood although this type of wood is not entirely suitable; but works constructed in war are never up to the standard of those of the parade ground, the point is to accomplish your objective and make use of everything available.

7.

mark down such houses as might, by throwing infantry into them, serve for serve for (sic) temporary block-houses, and how to strengthen them by earth works on their flank and in front

See the map. The limited time available does not allow any increase in the number of works, but a few works well placed can achieve the objective. The two houses of Messers Towsand and Dolts would be flanked by the adjacent fleche on the right, the one at the back, and the various batteries which could be positioned on the slope of the basin. The other houses would be protected by the fleches and batteries marked on the map.

I will not comment on the arrangements inside the buildings; all the advantages which they offer will be utilised.

8.

where it may be advisable to open communications to enable our infantry and cavalry to take up their ground and support each other

See the map and chapter 6 of the memo

9.

and where to destroy such ditches as might serve as cover to an enemy forming as he moves forward from the beach

See chapter 6 of the memo

10.

and to fix on roads where to run down twelve pounders and howitzers to bear up the head of columns forcing their way from the beach

See the map and chapters 3 and 6 of the memo

Dublin, 11th February 1797

Major La Chaussée