

Fortress Study Group
TOUR to SOUTHERN IRELAND, May 2013
Dr Stephen Cannon-Brookes

England's and subsequently Britain's long and tangled relationship with Ireland provides a complex backdrop to the interpretation of the fortifications visited within this year's Study Tour, led by **Bill Clements**, which complemented his programme for the annual conference in 2003, based in Northern Ireland at Coleraine.



The builders of Ireland's post-medieval fortifications had two objectives, namely the control of internal routes within the country and the defence of coasts, in particular ports suitable for invasion

forces. Why many of these places were fortified requires understanding England's close involvement in Ireland from the C11th until the early 20th. Throughout this long period, whilst 'Britain' acted as an occupying power, Irish national identity was preserved and often violently expressed. With limited roads and strong local loyalties, the control of internal communications was continuously in question in what was otherwise a unitary country with minimal cause for external tension with other states. One of the major changes in the internal balance of power came with the introduction of artillery in the late C15th, finally permitting the Crown to exert control over the aristocratic families that had dominated most of the island outside the areas close to Dublin. Castles soon gave way to forts, with the new techniques such as bastions and embrasures being rapidly incorporated in defences. Forts, fortified barracks and towns became a means for the Dublin and London governments to exert control over the country, whilst the island as whole became a target for external threats, notably from the Spanish and French. The latter became sufficiently potent that coastal defences, mostly blockhouses, were constructed from the mid C16th to defend harbours, particularly on the southern coast. Whilst England's navy was always regarded as the primary form of defence of its 'colony' the subsequent four hundred years saw substantial investment in fortifications. The construction of coastal defences, some of which were extended up substantial rivers, such as the Shannon,

continued until Ireland's independence in 1921, with its extension until 1938 when Britain finally relinquished its 'Treaty Ports' to the Republic of Ireland.

Dublin's defences were the focus of **Day 1** of the Tour. The City had outgrown its medieval defences before the arrival of artillery and relied on a chain of castles in the surrounding Pale for its landward defence. Nothing new was built until the earthworks added in the 1640s and these survived into the second half of the C17th. Numerous plans for citadels came and went, and were only implemented in the C18th. No substantial seaward defences were built, except for Fort Ringsend (not visited) until the chain of Martello Towers and batteries constructed in 1803-5, which were maintained through the C19th and augmented in the 1850s, notably to defend the new harbour of Kingstown, now known as Dún Laoghaire, our first visit.



Reaching the **East Pier battery** (above, Bing Maps), at the end of a mile long breakwater was conveniently achieved using a minibus. The work is nearly circular and was completed in 1857, to be armed with 68-pdr and 32-pdr SB guns. On the seaward side there are casements, but most of the guns were placed on garrison carriages in pits accommodated in the width of the ramparts (below).



The fort was restored in 2011 and is in good condition, though interiors were not visited. Dublin originally had 28 Martello Towers of which only one was visited, this being **No.7 South (Tara)**. Unusually this is located on a hillside, well above sea level. It was built with a rectangular three gun battery and a small caponier protecting the base of the tower – a feature unique to this work (below, 1). The whole site is in immaculate condition, largely thanks to its owner Niall O'Donoghue, who has devoted many years to its restoration and has gone as far as having a reproduction iron 18-pdr cast and mounted on the tower. The Group was treated to a firing

demonstration, carried out by period-clad artillerymen (*below, 2*) and afterwards a guided tour and refreshments.



Magazine Fort was upgraded in the mid C19th with curiously weak musketry cavaliers at the salients of the bastions, several of which received concrete additions to be reused as pillboxes in WWII (*above, NE corner, 'ravelin' to left*). The Fort played several starring roles in the history of the Irish Republic, notably during the Easter Rising when there was an unsuccessful attempt to blow it up and then in 1939 when it was raided by the IRA [see *Casemate* 91 pp29,30]. Today, it is in the care of the Office of Public Works and **Margaret Gormley**, Superintendent of Phoenix Park with several colleagues were present to guide the Group around the Fort and discuss plans to recover it from its currently very poor state, the last estimate for this being €18m. Despite the liberal use of cones and tape members of the Group visited all parts of the Fort and these forays initiated a number of productive conversations on detailed and strategic issues for the Fort's conservation and re-use.



The sole surviving part of Dublin's land defences is **Magazine Fort**, in Phoenix Park, built in 1735 as a square work with four demi-bastions, extended in 1801 with a triangular projection in advance of the gate and containing more accommodation (*below, N at top, Google Earth*). As the name suggests the fort was built with the purpose of housing the main powder magazines for Dublin, when their location in Dublin Castle became too hazardous.



Immediately to the North a rather large tenaille trace work was simultaneously constructed and called Star Fort. This does not survive, though recent archaeology has located it.



The day concluded with a visit to **Collins Barracks** (*above*), now part of the National Museum. Dating from the early C18th the scale of the buildings comes as something of a surprise and as a whole the complex reflects an important facet of England's involvement in Ireland through the stationing of troops throughout the Country. Included within the Museum are interesting displays on Irish military life and the Easter Uprising.

Following dinner **Ian Stevenson** whetted everyone's appetite for the week's programme with a series of slides from his previous forays in the South of Ireland and also points of reference for changes in condition of the sites we were due to visit.

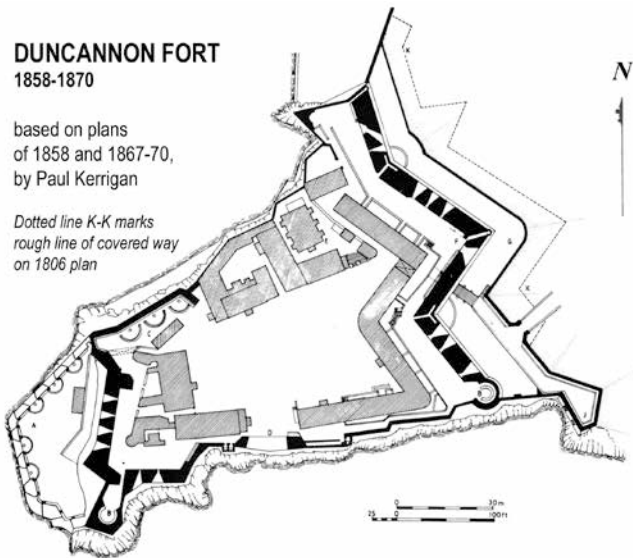
Ireland's southern coast is punctuated by a number of natural harbours and the fortifications to secure them became a substantial element in the defence of the country. The majority of the Tour focused on these, the Group working westwards as far as Bantry Bay. **Day 2's** itinerary took in the easternmost of the Harbours, the large stretch of water leading to the City of Waterford,

whose principle defence was the **Castle of Duncannon**, located on a short peninsula on the eastern shore and commanding the deep-water channel. The earliest parts of the Fort which replaced the castle date from 1587 and the tenaille trace rock-cut ditch was excavated shortly afterwards creating the strongest work in SE Ireland at the time. However, the position suffers from being overlooked by adjacent high ground, a problem only given substantial attention following the construction of two Martello Towers in the early C19th. Duncannon has one of the most eventful histories of a fortified place in Ireland; it was besieged in 1641-43, 1645 and 1649-50 and was the point of departure for James II after the Battle of the Boyne.

DUNCANNON FORT
1858-1870

based on plans of 1858 and 1867-70, by Paul Kerrigan

Dotted line K-K marks rough line of covered way on 1806 plan



Except for the curtain wall little remains of this period and reading the periods of the internal buildings is made more difficult by the ubiquitous use of concrete render from the early C20th. The Group was given an extensive tour of the Fort, exploring some of the less accessible areas along curtains. This yielded a variety of gun positions from different periods and later concrete works after the departure of the British in 1919. The latter included a 2 x12-pdr battery with searchlight positions. Notwithstanding the enthusiastic guides present during the visit and the effusive guide book, it is not easy to interpret the site which includes a variety of C19th works including positions for 68-pdrs from 1860, some of which were converted to RMLs and then later buildings including a large concrete engine house (*below, with searchlight position, magazine and engine house*) with engines and equipment substantially intact if in poor condition and with far greater capacity than needed for two 12-pdrs.



There was some debate about the date of the casemated battery built into the counterscarp and commanding the south side of the Fort. Bill Clements confirmed that it was early C19th.

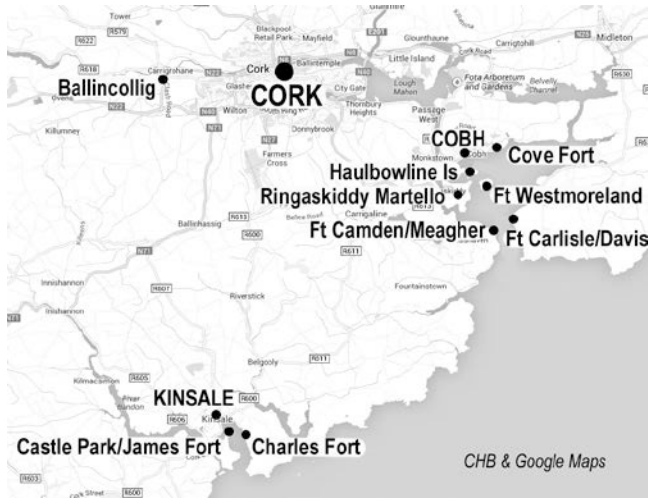
The route away from the Fort provided distant views of the Martellos and also a good idea of how severely overlooked is the site. The length of the drive to **Waterford** gave a good sense of how far inland the City is located. Some stretches of the medieval walls survive including **Reginald's Tower** and the town faced one of the earliest artillery attacks in Ireland in 1495. This led to the addition of gun loops in the curtain wall towers (*below*), though it was not until the threat of Spanish invasion in 1587 that major modern additions were made to the town's defences, to be followed by a bastioned citadel (1624-26) attached to the city wall at its highest point on its western side.

None of these works is visible and during a guided tour of the walls the only post-medieval work

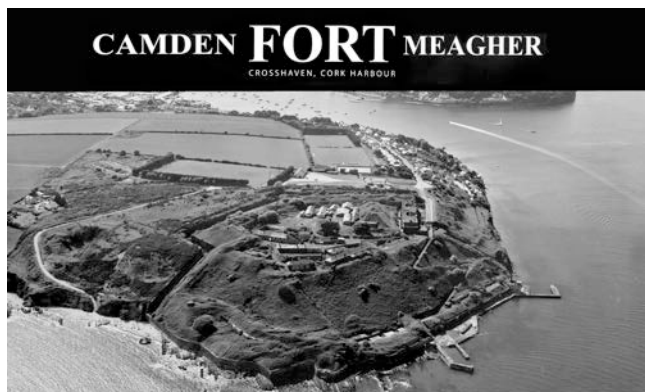


viewed by the Group was the foundations of a salient close to the remains of the St James gate. The surviving defences of Waterford are heavily restored as are the remains of **Dungarvan Castle**, built to control the next harbour to the west. No attempt was made to upgrade the medieval castle; in the bailey of the castle is a mid-C18th barracks, which given its highly spruced up condition could have been a reconstruction. Entering Cork in the evening, the Group was driven past another fine C19th barracks complex also now named after Michael Collins. This was part of a large collection of garrison buildings on the hill to the north of the City which has now been largely released for civilian use. The Group was accommodated in the former hospital, now the Ambassador Hotel, where were very well looked after.

In the latter half of the C18th the advantages of Cork's great natural harbour encouraged the Navy to switch its principle base here from Kinsale. This initiated a major review of the then-limited defences of the anchorage starting with the two sides of the narrow entry passage and also the control of the main channel which takes a somewhat circuitous path into the town, past several islands. The town itself was long considered indefensible and the earlier Elizabeth Fort (1603) is poorly sited and overlooked. Due to time pressures this Fort was not visited. **Day 3** was devoted to two major forts overlooking the entrance to the Harbour **Forts Camden** and **Carlisle** renamed **Meagher** and **Davis** in 1938.



Both these substantial C19th works sit on the sites of earlier fortifications from the C17th and 18th and possibly earlier. Camden was the first to be visited and is on the west side of the channel leading into Cork Harbour. Originally called Ram Head Battery, the C18th batteries were replaced after 1862 by a substantial complex of casemated barracks with rock cut ditches and RML batteries. As with most of the other defences of Cork Harbour the eventual abandonment of the work by the British following the handover of the Treaty Ports in 1938 leading to a long period in which Irish Defence Forces struggled to occupy and use facilities far in excess of their needs. This led to gradual abandonment and in Camden's case handover to the local authority in 1989. Despite securing the site, decay swiftly accelerated and in 2010 day-to-day management was given to a local residents group with the financial support of the council.



CORK COUNTY COUNCIL IN CONJUNCTION WITH RESCUE CAMDEN COMMITTEE
www.rescuecamden.ie

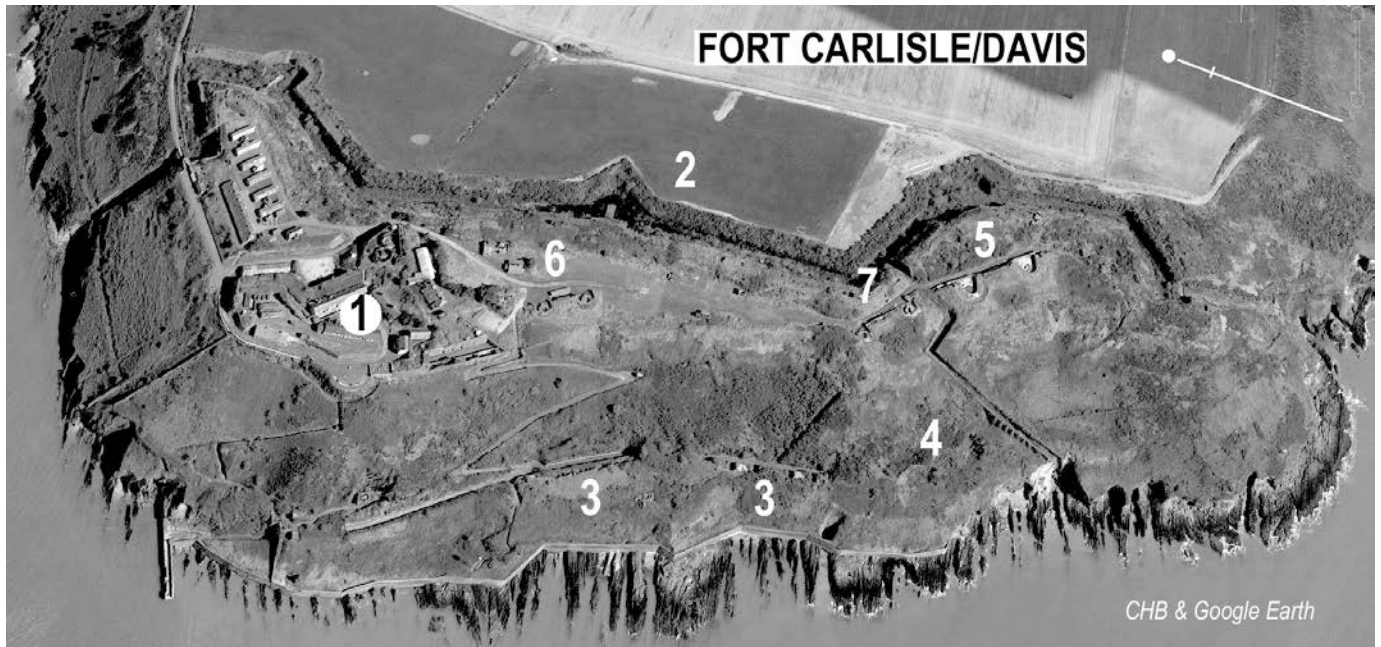
The results are impressive to say the least and Camden is now partially restored with the full participation of the community and what looks like a promising long term future keyed into the local economy. The management team is led by **Paul Brierley** and he described the work underway and led the Group around most of the Fort, starting with the upper levels of casemated barracks and substantial ramparts. Seeing work in progress it was possible to gauge how much has been recovered and restored. In the brief period since the army left virtually all the timberwork had been destroyed and the need to make hundreds of new windows has kept local craftsmen busy during the sustained building recession that Ireland is currently experiencing. The intention is to let out many of

the internal buildings to ensure that the Fort is continuously occupied, whilst promoting the site as both a tourist destination and a local resource. For instance, a decision was made to quickly open the café and make a viewing platform to encourage visitors and create a venue. The scale of the site has influenced the timetable, so for instance it will be some time before the massive double height caponier is accessible again and the ditches fully cleared. All the upper batteries are clean and with their now-evident revisions reflect the swift development of artillery during the latter half of the C19th and into the 20th. For instance Upper Left Battery was built for 3 x 7-in RMLs and was remodelled for 2 x 6-in BLs whilst Upper Right Battery was converted from 3 x 10-in RMLs to 3 x 12-pdr QF positions (*below, Fort Carlisle/Davis beyond*).



The lower part of the Fort holds more delights and the Group descended down a roofed covered way lined with musketry loops. This bisects the lower batteries, Lower Left having been constructed with 4 x 7-in on Moncrieff mountings and Lower Right, completely underground having 4 x 10-in RMLs in individual casemates. The iron shields for these are still present and later internal constructions – barrack accommodation - looks likely to be removed. The batteries have a finely rusticated concrete gateway overlooking the bottom of a substantial ramp leading down from the upper part of the fort and thence through an adjacent gateway to small harbour designed to serve the Fort and later converted into a Brennan Torpedo station. Areas of adjacent quays are in poor condition, but much of the narrow gauge railway lines is still present. Slightly to the north is a second later harbour built as a mining depot, above which is a further set of narrow gauge lines and buildings, one of which looks like a small station. The site deserves a long visit and is becoming increasingly rewarding thanks to **Rescue Camden**. In terms of both the balance of public/private of funding and ownership as well as planning, the Rescue Camden Project is worthy of sustained attention by those responsible for fortifications.

The channel between forts Camden and Carlisle is only 1.3 miles wide and the two forts share many similarities. The first recorded defensive work on the site of **Fort Carlisle/Davis** was Fort Corkbeg, which Kerrigan notes was probably the first bastioned fort in Ireland. It was probably planned in 1551 and appears on later plans with Italian style bastions typical of the 1540s and with a blockhouse close to water level similar to that seen later by James Fort at Kinsale.



Nothing remains of these works nor of the later Prince Rupert's Tower built slightly to the south. From plans and evidence on the ground it appears that both these works were replaced in the late C18th and linked together to form a more substantial work with a growing line of sea level batteries at the foot of the slope which the upper fort overlooks. The two- and eventually three-bastioned replacement to Corkbeg (1) formed a citadel to the positions and the Fort's land front was defended using a continuous ditch which descends the hillsides to sea level at either extremity. This arrangement remained in place until 1860 when the footprint of the Fort was enlarged with a new more substantial ditch and land front (2), increasing the area of the fort and requiring new rock-cut ditches down to sea level. These works rendered the bastioned citadel largely obsolete and the northernmost bastion flank is now completely open.

As at Camden, caponiers and flanking galleries were built to defend the main ditch. The expanded footprint allowed more space for barrack buildings, which were also built in the former citadel. Unlike Camden, Carlisle (locally referred to as Fort Davis) is still in military hands and as a consequence has not suffered quite the same attrition from unwelcome visitors. The range of buildings covered in rampant vegetation has long served as a 'training environment' for the Irish Defence Forces and in discussion it was heard that there is now growing interest in the heritage value of the site, which is reflected in the gradual clearing of batteries and areas of the Fort. The Group was treated to a useful overview of the Fort and Cork's defences by **Sgt David Allen**, who spoke enthusiastically about work underway at Carlisle. This taken with other projects is evidence of maturing perceptions of the pre-1919 military heritage in the Republic and, as the direct memories of occupying forces diminish, a sense of collective history and cultural significance is emerging. The FSG has seen parallels for this in recent tours, notably in Northern Poland where nearly all the major fortifications bear the imprimatur of other countries. From the old citadel, the Group was led down to the lower level batteries. The C18th batteries were replaced in the 1860s and 70s by two four-gun batteries

(3) of 7-in RMLs on Moncrieff mountings and slightly later by larger RMLs in casemated positions (4), namely 2 x 10-in, 3 x 11-in and 2 x 12-in. These casemates still have their iron shields, with many of the 'fittings' still in place (*below, casemate converted into an engine house*).



Dense vegetation covers most of this area and the 6-pdr battery was inaccessible, so there is probably much to rediscover. The 7-in RMLs were replaced with 12-pdr QFs early in the C20th and Carlisle was rearmed with a twin 9.2-in BL battery, named South Battery (5), in 1906 (*below*).



These were followed by two twin 6-in batteries at North Battery (6) and Rupert's Tower (7) along with three 12-pdrs. The batteries are in reasonable condition having been stripped of most fittings and the rotting remains of shell hoists look forlorn. All these batteries are along the

seaward edge of the upper part of the fort overlooking the Channel and were built at the same time as a new battery to the south of Camden at **Templebreedy**, which received two 9.2-in guns. As often was the case, the history of these sites is confused by the moving of guns between sites and difficulties in pinning down when they were operational. Carlisle is fortunate in retaining one of its 6-in guns and this provided a highpoint during the latter part of the visit.

It is a well-worn observation that to appreciate defences they need to be seen from both the offensive and defended sides. Day 3's visits to Camden and Carlisle greatly sharpened the Group perspective of the forts, enhanced during a boat trip around Cork Harbour on **Day 4**, blessed with clear weather and a calm sea. The Group embarked at Cobh and had a good view of **Cove Fort** (below) a multilevel battery sited on Great Island



overlooking the deepwater channel into Cork and where it turns by 90° to pass Haulbowline Is and then through a further right angle in the narrow straight between Great Island and the Mainland. Built in 1743 the fort was heavily criticised for being badly overlooked from behind and from adjacent ground. Today, the lower parts with demi-bastions appear to be in reasonable condition and the work largely complete overall. Passing Spike Island little could be seen of the substantial hexagonal Fort Westmoreland which was clearly carefully scarped and substantially re-profiled during its construction. Some 12-pdrs and two 6-in BLs were spotted in their casemates on the south side of the fort facing the entrance channel. The furthest extent of the boat ride gave extensive views of the exteriors of Camden and Carlisle and time to relate yesterday's experience to the view from the offensive side.

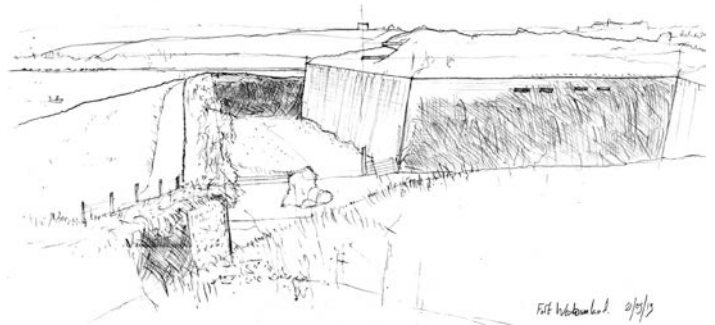


It was just possible to spot the casemates for some of the larger RMLs and further clearance of both forts would make them easier to read (above, Fort Carlisle).

Several hours were provided to explore Spike Island and **Fort Westmoreland/Mitchell**. The Island was purchased by the British government in the 1770s when its strategic importance emerged during the navy's switch of its bases from Kinsale to Cork. An extensive battery in the south east corner of the Island was finished by 1779 only to be followed by a more permanent work, quickly envisaged but rather slowly implemented. Started in 1806 the present substantial fortress was only completed in the 1860s with the aid of convict labour, by which time it must have already looked somewhat old-fashioned.



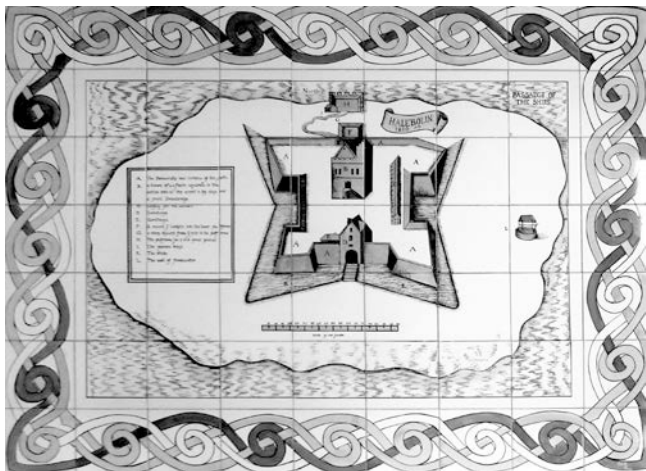
The Fort is reminiscent of Fort Cumberland by Portsmouth and has just a glacis and no outworks or covered way, probably due to its Island location. Ditch defence was provided by casemates in the flanks with wide loops formed by apparently leaving gaps in ashlar scarps without any architectural treatment (below, with Ringaskiddy Martello on the horizon. Stephen Cannon-Brookes).



It is not clear whether these were in the original design. Most of the works in the bastions were filled in during the fort's use as a prison and are now being excavated, if a little over enthusiastically using a mechanical digger. Following 1860, Westmoreland was armed with a range of RMLs in open gun pits on the bastions and these were replaced in 1903 with two 6-in BLs on the central bastion (no.3) facing the channel into the harbour. In 1940 the guns were relocated into new positions with aerial cover on the adjacent bastions, where they are still, and 40mm Bofors were later emplaced for anti-aircraft defence. Today, the Island and Fort are in the care of Cork Council and the scale of the challenge of what to do with the site is fully recognised. The Fort is open with a café and a display in the old gym, whilst work is in progress to reveal the defensive characteristics of the site and in particular the weaponry employed. Both 6-in guns are being returned to

working condition and other ordnance including Bofors guns has been acquired. Larger projects have yet to be started, such as the conservation and possible restoration of the pair of large two-storey barracks, both of which are unroofed, one having been burnt during a prison riot. At present, access is only by boat and there some speculation as to how road access might be improved to ensure long term financial viability.

It was a short boat ride to **Haulbowline Island**, Ireland's main naval base. The visit started with a walk up to the Martello Tower (1812), one of five built as part of the Cork defences. This with the triple-gunned **Ringaskiddy Tower** commanded the entrance to the inner sections of the channel to the City. Refurbished since the last FSG visit in 1989, the tower contains elements of a collection once destined for a naval museum. On top there is a gun in place on a deteriorating carriage. The nearby square concrete tower also afforded a good view of the late C19th victualling yard. Several of the store houses clearly have been abandoned and the condition of the historic buildings varies considerably. These areas were not included in the visit. There was also a view across to the adjacent small island which was occupied by **Magazine Fort**, the main ordnance store for Cork and now its crematorium, reportedly a highly successful conversion. Progress to tea in the Officers' Mess was arrested by a naval 4-in QF with shield and members were 'encouraged' to leave space for cadets who were being drilled on the adjacent parade ground.



Tile panel in the Officers' Mess showing the fort at 'Halebolin, 1610 AD'

Sunshine and sea air had evidently sharpened appetites as a small mountain of scones was demolished along with the help of tea and other refreshments. This provided an opportunity to thank our hosts for their guidance and welcome onto the base. An early supper was followed by a talk on the **Ballincollig Gunpowder Mills** by **Jenny Webb**, chair of its preservation group. This provided a glimpse into the scale of what was one of Ireland's large early C19th industrial sites. She related the chequered history of the site since the closure of the Mills in 1903. The recent years have provided a cautionary tale of the positive outcome of funding to save an important early industrial site and then the effect of subsequent neglect to support the investment made. She explained the steps she has taken to create a local residents group to support and interpret the site and how difficult it was to achieve progress

without the support of the local administration. The contrast with the evident success of Rescue Camden was only too clear.

Day 5 was devoted to the defences of Kinsale, which is only a short distance to the south of Cork. In terms of chronology this involved several steps back in the evolution of Ireland's defences. Kinsale was subject to Spanish attack in 1601 and the town was occupied until it was retaken later in the year by English forces. This immediately led to a series of defensive works, the principle being a large pentagonal bastioned earthwork designed by *Paul Ive* and called **Castle Park**. The Fort occupies the crest of the hill overlooking the town from the south, which is effectively a promontory since it is surrounded on three sides by the harbour channel. It soon proved too large to man and a smaller square demi-bastioned work, **James Fort**, with interior accommodation buildings was inserted in the middle of the Fort between 1608 and 1611 (*below, from NW, Google Earth*).



This was followed by a blockhouse on the west bank of the channel. The landward side of the pentagonal fort was faced in stone in the 1620s and a further earthwork rampart was built across the neck of the promontory by Prince Rupert in 1649 at the same time as his addition of a new enceinte for the town and gun positions at the opening of the harbour. As Kinsale came to be treated as a primary Naval base in southern Ireland and following the Dutch attack on the Medway in 1667 attention was directed to the castle of **Ringcurran** on the east bank. The castle appears to have been converted by Orrery initially into a battery before its incorporation in a major new fort, started in 1678. This complex history helps to explain the Fort's curious tenaille trace facing the channel composed of tiers of batteries and then subsequent extension up the slope to try to create a protective land front in the form of a crownwork, itself bisected by a substantial traverse. Beyond the ditch is a pleasingly complete covered way with places d'arms and traverses. The Fort's design immediately attracted criticism as it is badly overlooked by surrounding high ground, which helps to explain why it held out for only twelve days in 1690 when the east curtain was breached. The subsequent repairs are clearly discernible. As an ensemble, **Charles Fort** is one of the best preserved late C17th fortresses in the British Isles and the Group made use of the several hours to make a thorough visit with access being given to some of the interiors of the bastions. The site is in the care of the Office of Public

Works, which has undertaken a huge amount of conservation work and in some areas re-roofed several of the internal buildings.



Given that Charles Fort (*above, from N*) lost its major defensive role at the beginning of the C19th and was handed over largely as a ruin the transformation has been vast and the current state is approaching immaculate (*below, sea entrance to Devil's Bastion*).

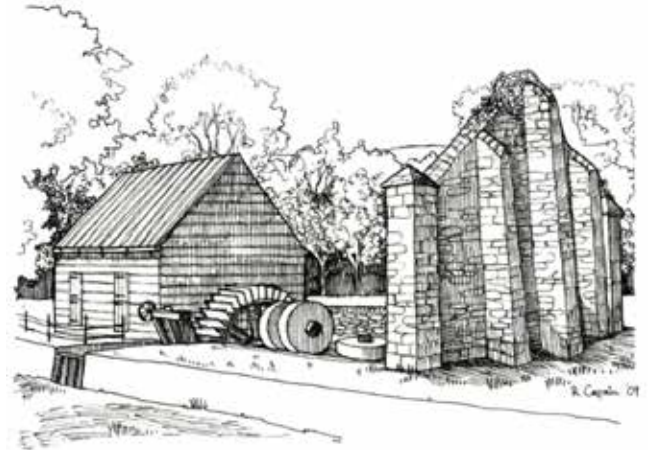


Similar attention has also recently been given to James Fort, which contrasts with the overgrown remains of Castle Park Fort surrounding it. With the sun shining it was difficult to think of a more congenial spot for a picnic lunch (*below*) looking down the length of the harbour and across to Charles Fort .



The diminutive size of James Fort serves as a reminder of how small were most C16th and early C17th forts in Ireland. The most puzzling aspect of James Fort is the plan of the internal buildings which do not directly correspond to the early C17th views. The 'towers' on the opposite corners are proportionately larger and whilst the stonework appears to be similar to the surrounding wall, the presence of slits suggests a different type and possible period of building. The sea level blockhouse is similarly difficult to read and

much of its current appearance is due to later modifications after it lost its defensive function and was used as a cooperage. On the drive back into Cork, a stop was made to visit the **Ballincollig Powder Mills**, where the Group was given a tour by *Jenny Webb*. This large complex site is not easy to interpret since the buildings were spread out to minimise the effects of accidents and most are in an advanced state of decay and often engulfed in trees. The network of canals that supplied power and transport is largely silted up and the areas with the administrative buildings and barracks have been redeveloped. In 1993 a major EC grant enabled part of the site to be cleared and one of the timber composition mills to be rebuilt and put into working order (*below, reconstructed Incorporating Mill with Blast Wall, by R Cronin*).



Since then the funding collapsed and in 2002 the visitor centre was closed. Current interest in the site is now almost wholly maintained by a local support group and its long term survival is clearly at stake. Once again contrasts were drawn with the energy and public/private partnership underway at Fort Camden. A brief visit was made to the Composition Mills (interior closed after a health and safety assessment by the local authority) and then to the charcoal furnace, circular timber store and lastly one of the distinctly exotic powder magazines, which left most of the Group somewhat baffled and one member on the wrong side of the river. Whilst a search was mounted the Group visited the upstream end of the site and mused over the 'watch tower' with its unorthodox corbelling. With this experience and uncertainty over the site's future in mind there were plenty of questions posed to guests from the local authority at the evening Reception given by the FSG to thank the many contacts who had been involved in the planning of the Tour. **Bill Clements** drew comparisons with the previous FSG tour and the developments since 1989 and it was an opportunity to thank all concerned and express pleasure in how much work has been undertaken to conserve military heritage in the south of Ireland.

A scenic drive westwards from Cork under the shadow of the Shehy Mountains brought the Group to **Bantry Bay on Day 6**. This sheltered bay was used for assembling convoys in the late C18th and to protect against raiders. Demands were soon made to defend two separate anchorages, adjacent to Bere and Whiddy Islands. The need for fortification was heightened by the failed attempt at a

landing by a French force in 1796. Temporary batteries were erected and these were replaced by stone redoubts, batteries and Martello towers. The anchorage at Berehaven was still considered important enough to justify a new programme of late 19th and early C20th defences and it was to become one of the three Treaty Ports retained by Britain until 1938.



The ferry ride from Castletown Berehaven to **Bere Island** was blessed with strong sunshine and almost no wind and the Group was collected by a group of minibuses and driven the short distance to examine the defences at the western end of the Island. These commanded the narrow channel facing the Atlantic, unsuitable for larger vessels. The C19th batteries were replaced from 1898 with a twin 4.7-in QF battery (Reenduff) (*below and colour p30. FCP centre, magazines below*), a twin 6-in battery (Derrycreeveen) and also a 4 x 12-pdr QF battery (Ardnakinna).



Whilst separate works, these batteries are so close together that Derrycreeveen (*below*) 'shoots' over the top of Reenduff and their surrounding barbed wired entanglements must have been connected together.



There was just enough time for the energetic to reach all three works and the searchlight positions at sea level below Reenduff. All are stripped of fittings, timberwork and most easily accessible metal leaving the concrete in a forlorn state and the underground rooms as shelter for cattle. The siting of the batteries drew some comment, especially Derrycreeveen, which has no clear view along the channel. It was learnt that this battery was intended only to be used at night with the searchlights. Whilst both of the larger gun batteries are of conventional layout, twin gun pits separated by a range finder location and with magazines and accommodation below; there are some additional features, notably a loopholed 'pillbox' to rear of Derrycreeveen. Further behind are bases for barrack buildings, a reminder that the site has lost nearly all its ancillary structures. Moving eastwards, refreshments were laid out in a small hotel and some members availed themselves of the bar. Fortified, mostly with tea and coffee as well as our packed lunch, there was a short, but stiff, walk up to **Ardagh Martello Tower** (*below*).



On a 170m high hill and nearly out of range of the sea, except for a small area of Berehaven, this seems to be one of the most improbably sited Martellos. The view nevertheless is spectacular and it is a pity that there was no access to the tower's interior, especially since it was recently restored. Despite the warm sunshine it proved a windy spot and must have been an uncomfortable posting for much of the year. The eastern end of Bere Island is relatively low and received most of the batteries to defend the Berehaven anchorage. This initially consisted of a line of three Martello Towers and an open battery close to the point. Both the central tower at Rerrin and the easternmost at Lonehort were demolished to make way for later batteries both combining a single 9.2-in and two 6-in BLs. A 4.7-in battery was also built on the point. Concern over fast moving torpedo boats led to the construction of a 4 x 12-pdr QF battery (Ardaragh) at sea level overlooking the entrance to the anchorage, between 1903 and 1907. The afternoon concentrated on the batteries close to the Point. **Lonehort Fort** is a special draw since both 6-in BLs are still in place (*colour p30*). The irregular trace is surrounded by an un-flanked concrete-lined ditch. A parade ground with surface and underground accommodation divides the conventional twin 6-in position, clearly sited to command the

immediate approaches to the anchorage from the slightly elevated 9.2-in gun pit with a 360° field of fire.



A curved sunken way leads to the 9.2-in position

It is curious that it wasn't until works were finished that these positions were found not to have a clear field of fire towards the entrance of Bantry Bay! The relatively intact condition of Lonehort and Ardaragh came as something of a surprise to most of the Group with considerable amounts of metalwork and most timberwork in place in Lonehort. The shell hoists in the 6-in position (*below*) are largely



intact as well as davits and chains between the cast iron balusters. At **Ardaragh** the discovery of searchlights still in their positions (*below*), along with the remains of capacitors yielded similar expressions of delight. These survivals seem to have been the result of continued military occupation and the remoteness of the batteries.



The significance of their survival was shared with local hosts and it was felt that Lonehort could be brought back to a *complete* state

relatively easily. The more energetic hiked down to searchlight positions on the point itself and the 4.7-in position, but time was limited by the ferry schedule and the



minibuses swiftly crossed the length of the island in time for the last departure.

The Tour concluded on **Day 7** with a return to Dublin, briefly stopping at **Cahir** to view the Castle. There was sufficient time to make a tour of the buildings and spot the early gun loops described as 'stirrup-loops', probably from the early C16th. As the Castle has been heavily restored, starting in the mid-C19th it is difficult to determine what is original. Shelter was taken from the energetic and cooling wind in the reconstructed Great Hall and extensive displays within the castle, including a detailed account of the 1599 siege with a splendid model.

★The Group is indebted to **Bill Clements** for a fascinating week, which had required considerable preparation and well as masterly touch with a higher authority to lay on dry and mostly sunny days throughout the Tour. He was ably supported by **Alistair Graham-Kerr** who with **Alastair Fyfe** compiled a detailed companion guide to the Tour, which deserves a place on everyone's bookshelves. ★

*There were numerous people in Ireland without which the Tour would have been impossible. They were of great help and assistance, for which we thank them and their staff: **Gerry Dunne**, Dun Laoghaire Harbour Co; **Margaret Gormley**, Park Superintendent; **Nial O'Donoghue**, Martello 7; **Margaret Coady**, Duncannon Fort; **Donnchadh O'Ceallachain**, Waterford Mediaeval Museum; **Brig Gen Diarmid Fitzgerald**, GOC Southern Brigade and **Commandant Charles Dineen**; **Paul Brierley**, Camden Fort Meagher; **Commodore MA Mellet**, Flag Officer Commanding Naval Service, Haulbowline and **Commander Cormac Rynne**; **Tom O'Neill**, Manager Spike Island; **Mrs Jenny Webb**; **John Walsh**, Bere Island Projects Group Ltd★*

(Spelling; some names are freely spelt in two ways – Ft Mitchel/Mitchell, Derrycreeveen and Derrycrevan, and are not entirely consistent in this report .Ed.)

(Photographs and maps by **Charles Blackwood**) ◆

[After the Tour ended at Cahir, my wife **Anne** and I, accompanied by **Mike** and **Pam Fiorini** headed north to Shannonbridge where the famous *tête du pont* can be found, staying overnight in Derry/Londonderry and back to Dublin via Dunluce Castle and the Giant's Causeway. We found Shannonbridge a great disappointment due to lack of access – half is in the grounds of a house - and lack of information (tourist office closed), but the caponier (*below*) is very nice. A lot of work has been done at Londonderry to remount and present the original guns sent from London in 1642 for the famous siege. They are said to form the largest collection of cannon in Europe whose exact provenance is known. The ramparts are in good order and signs of the Troubles have gone, which doesn't stop the youth of the Bogside trying to burn down the walls. **Charles Blackwood** ◆

