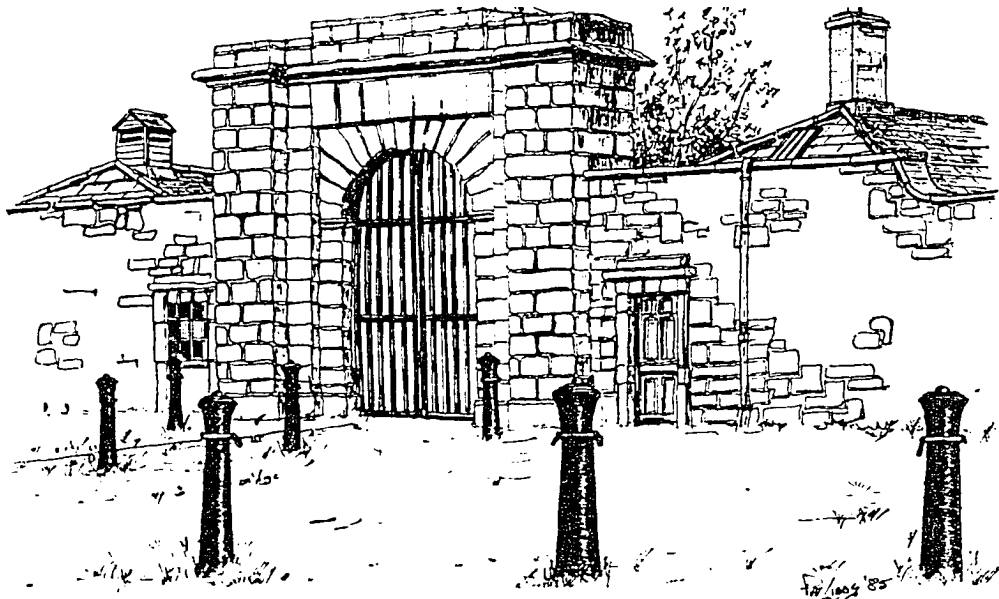


DUBLIN TODAY

By Pat Liddy

Beggars' Bush Cannon



THE strange-looking bollards lining the Haddington Road frontage of Beggars' Bush Barracks are actually real naval ordnance emplaced upright into the grass verge along the footpath over 150 years ago. The guns were once linked together by iron chains but these have since been removed.

With each weighing over half a ton, the cannon according to P. D. O'Donnell in his "Barracks and Posts of Ireland," are believed to have at one time formed the complete heavy armament complement of a Royal Navy frigate which was refitted during a Dublin stopover. The 18- and nine-pounder guns have been dated back to 1760 and have an emblem of King George III struck onto them.

A map of 1838 records 56 guns in situ but the collection now stands at only 43. Two others are being held in storage awaiting replacing when the temporary entrance to the Government Stationery Office is resealed. I have been unable to determine the whereabouts of the remaining 11 guns.

During the 18th and 19th centuries it was quite common in these islands to purchase redundant cannon — for about ten shillings each — and use them for fencing or as bollards to protect a building's corner or entrance from being damaged by cartwheels. A cannon ball was usually wedged halfway into the muzzle mouth. So popular did this practice become that, from the 1820s, iron foundries produced

imitation cannon and examples of these can still be found around the city including in Thomas Street, Smithfield and one in the Civic Museum.

Left as they are the cannon are now no more than a curiosity, totally lacking in visual impact. I would suggest that those flanking the main entrance could be left upright but they need to be set into a paved or cobbled area for greater effect and linked again with chains. The remainder could then be lifted and mounted on simple carriages behind the two lines of upright guns. If they were then placed on two stepped-up levels, representing a tiered Man-of-War, Dublin would gain an unique and significant tourist attraction .