

SOUTH ATLANTIC FORTRESS

The unique fortifications built by the East India Company on the Island of St. Helena, including the period of Napoleon's captivity, and subsequent defence strategy under Crown Rule.

By

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On 5th May 1659 the English East India Company established their first settlement on St. Helena which remained under Company rule until 22nd April 1834 when the Island was proclaimed a British Crown Colony.

The above is an imprint from the original East India Company stamp which is kept in the Archives at the Castle, Jamestown.

Translation from the Latin:-

"UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE KING AND PARLIAMENT OF ENGLAND"

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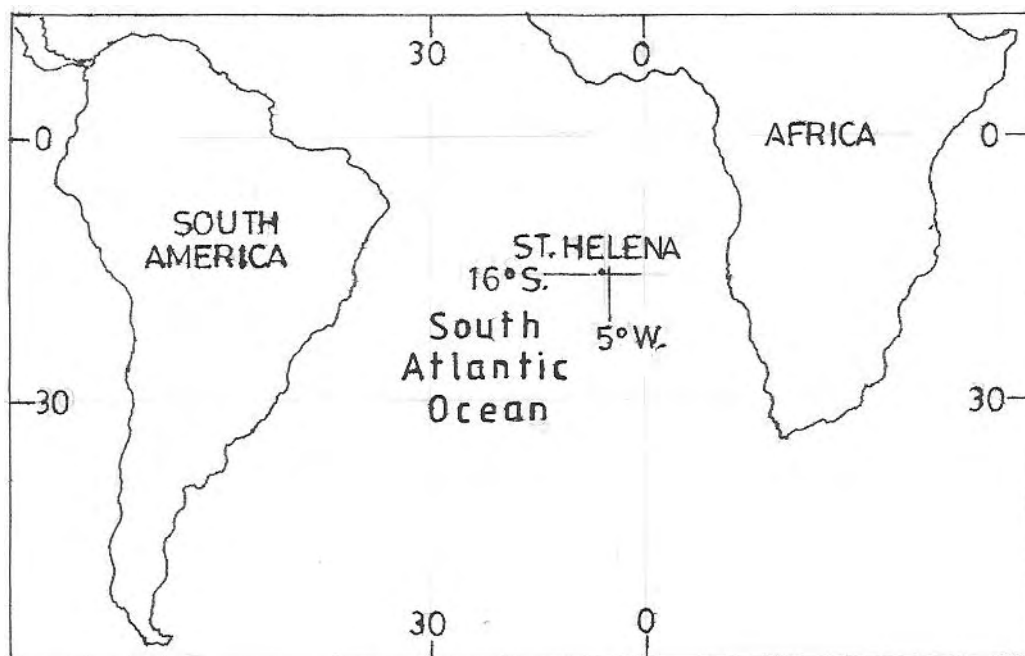
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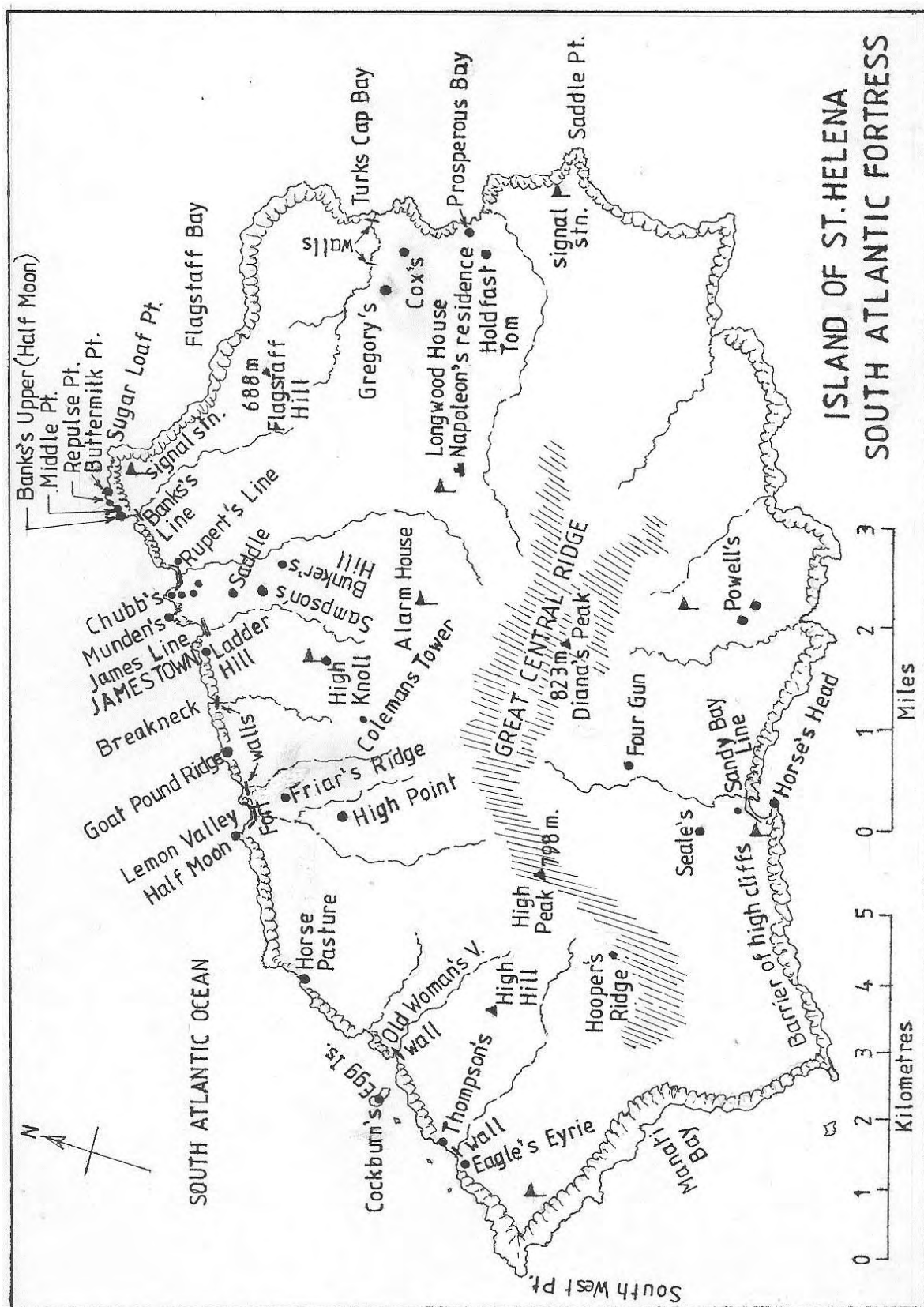
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Global position for St. Helena



Island of St. Helena

INTRODUCTION

Consisting of only about 47 square miles, the Island of St. Helena was formed in the South Atlantic Ocean from volcanic upheavals of great magnitude which are believed by geologists to have occurred 17 million years ago, resulting in an extremely rugged external appearance, but its central ridge of high peaks is remarkably scenic. It was also given a situation of extreme isolation, as the nearest land at more than 700 miles to the north-west is Ascension Island of an even smaller size, while the nearest continent is Africa at about 1200 miles due east to a position on the coast of Angola.

St. Helena was discovered on 21st May 1502, St. Helena's Day, by the Portuguese navigator, Juan da Nova Castella, who named the Island in honour thereof. For a long period the Portuguese were content to merely use the Island as a water provisioning point on their long voyages, while at the same time trying to keep its existence a secret to prevent other emerging maritime nations from using it.

By 1633 the Dutch were laying claim to the Island, but seemingly did not take possession as their interests became focused on other colonies. However the English East India Company having realised the Island's strategic value, seized the initiative in 1659 by establishing a settlement under the command of Captain John Dutton who became the first Governor. Under his direction the building of the first small fort, later named James Fort, was considered sufficient to defend the Island from attack. This view was certainly reinforced by the nature of the Island which had a natural defence barricade of an almost inaccessible surround of high rocky cliffs.

As events were to prove, both the Fort and the natural defences were not formidable enough to prevent invasion by the Dutch, but after re-taking the Island in 1673 the East India Company soon began developing a defence strategy which involved a system of fortified lines across the entrances to the very few possible landing places, and when these were all sealed up together with some less vulnerable entrances that only required an unfortified wall, by the mid 18th century St. Helena had become a Fortress that has never been invaded again.

This work covers all sectors of the Island's defences that ultimately made St. Helena the South Atlantic Fortress and gave reason for the British Government to select it as the most suitable place for Napoleon's captivity, during which period the Island's garrison was strongly reinforced with British Army regiments. The final chapter gives details of the military units that served on St. Helena.

Records appear to be scarce in respect of all those who worked on building the fortifications, but Records of the East India Company reveal that at least up until the early 19th century the penal system enforced a form of punishment whereby many offenders were ordered to work on the fortifications for a period, and there can be no doubt that slaves were often pressed into service. The St. Helena Regiments certainly participated in a supervisory

capacity, and the Royal Engineers who served intermittently on the Island from 1816 until 1945, were actively involved.

Very good examples of the stonemasons' craft are evident at many of these old fortifications which were basically built from local stone, but Portland and Purbeck stone brought out from England as ballast in sailing ships, was often used in selective positions, especially for gun platforms because of its load bearing advantage.

Many gaps in the period of origin for forts and batteries were narrowed down from information given by a Report on the Fortifications of the Island, made by Major James Rennell in 1777. He was an eminent geographer and military engineer who served in India for a long period with the East India Company as Surveyor-General.

Equally valuable was the data for spot heights above sea level of many fortifications, these being obtained from large scale elevation charts of the Island made in 1823 by Major Robert Seale of the St. Helena Artillery Regiment.

The author visited every fortification in this work and can vouch for the great difficulty of access to many of them. How much more difficult was their actual construction can only be left to the imagination. For easier reference they have been grouped within their own strategic geographical sector.

Chapter 1

JAMES FORT AND THE CASTLE

(Including a section on Patton's Battery)

Under a commission by the English East India Company to establish a fortified settlement on St. Helena, the pioneer force of soldiers and settlers commanded by Captain John Dutton were despatched from England in a small fleet of ships during February 1659. They arrived at St. Helena on 5th May 1659 and came ashore in the vicinity of what was then called the Landing Rocks, later known as the Landing Place, and much later the Jamestown Wharf. A Fort that was then built under the direction of Captain Dutton who became the first Governor, is recorded as having consisted of three bastions forming a triangle, with two of these near the sea front mounting 7 guns each, while a third bastion at the rear had 4 guns. Two redoubts at sea level, one each side of the seafront bastions, both had two pieces of ordnance.

The bay (later named James Bay) where they established their Fort, had first been used as a landing place by the Portugese who discovered the Island in 1502. At this stage it was deemed to be the only fortification necessary to secure the Island from attack, as it was believed the great high rocky cliffs lining practically the entire coastline were sufficient to deter any other landing by an invader.

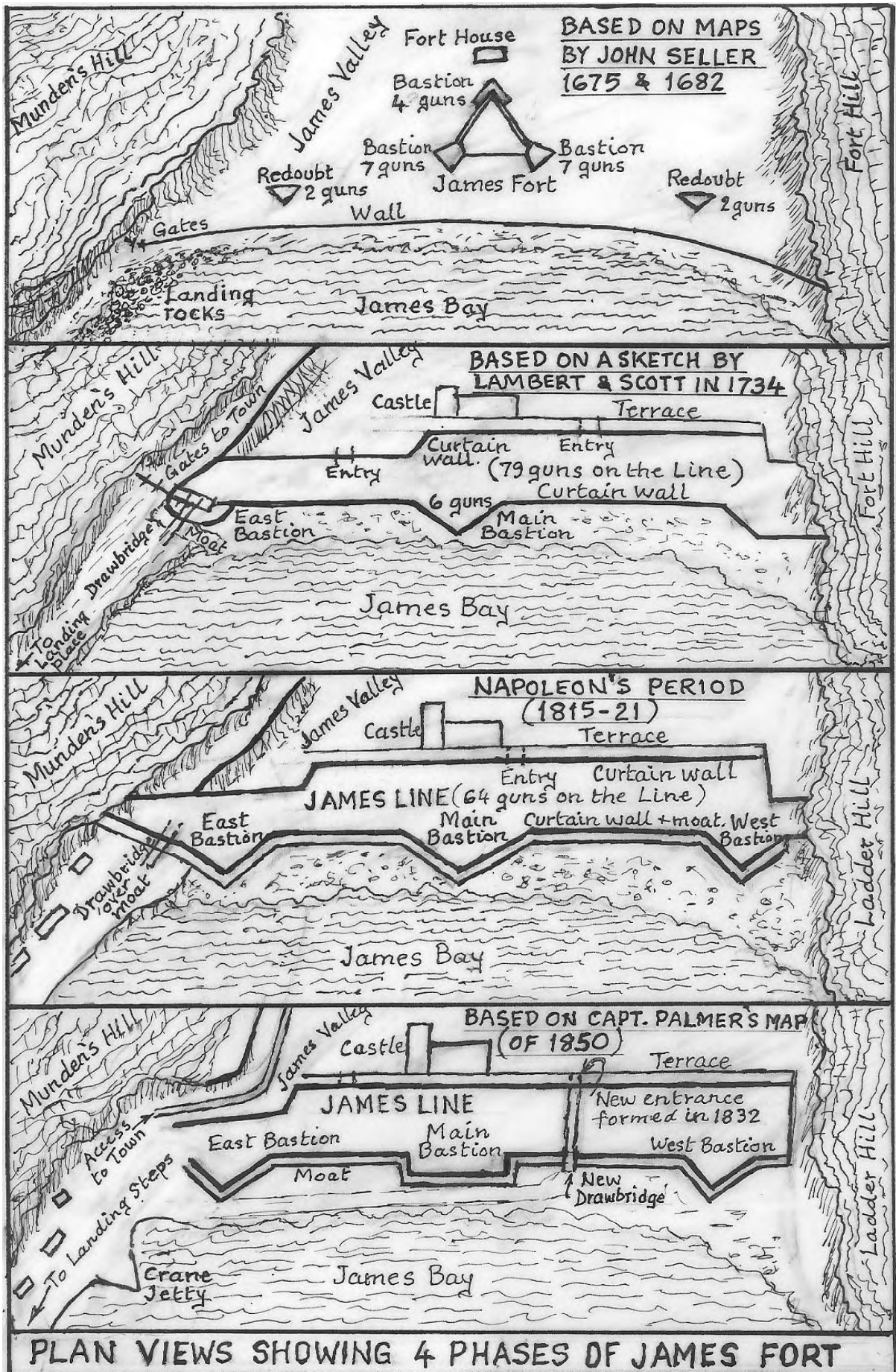
However the Dutch who had previously claimed the Island until their interest was diverted to forming a colony at the Cape of Good Hope, became aware that St. Helena had definite strategic advantages as a provisioning port of call. An unsubstantiated account*¹ gives the Dutch as having occupied St. Helena for a short while in 1665 when they were at war with England, but soon retaken by the English.

Certainly in the Dutch invasion of 1672, the Fort and the high rocky cliffs did not prove formidable enough, as having landed on the western side of the Island, the Dutch went overland to capture the Fort which remained in their hands until an English squadron under the command of Captain Richard Munden arrived to bombard them into surrender during May 1673.

From that time onwards, the defences of the Fort and elsewhere on the Island were greatly improved to circumvent any future invasion attempt. History has endorsed their successful efforts to fortify the Island, as it was never invaded again. In 1682 the Records indicate that the defences must have been considered secure enough for giving some attention to lesser affairs, as a stone wall built to enclose a large garden near the Fort became the origins of the present Public Gardens at Jamestown.

¹ *Footnote:- Mentioned in 1897 by Frederick Danvers in his Introduction to the List of Factory Records of the East India Company.

The Fort seems originally to have been termed York Fort, but by 1684 it had been named James Fort in honour of James, Duke of York, who acceded to the throne as James II in 1685. It was sometimes reversed in form to be given as Fort James, but nearly all the records name it as James Fort.



On 21st October 1684 there was a combined mutiny and rebellion by soldiers and freemen who endeavoured to take possession of James Fort, but when this failed, many of those involved were executed. It was only the first of several mutinies that were to occur during the Island's long and turbulent history.

The military units employed to garrison the Island consisted originally of those who had seen service elsewhere with the Company, but eventually two regiments formed on St. Helena were named the St. Helena Artillery Regiment and the St. Helena Infantry Regiment. In addition to the regular garrison, it was considered vital that in the event of invasion, every man on the Island would of necessity have to help defend it. Therefore land grants to settlers were made conditional in that a stipulated number of soldiers per acre had to be provided for establishing a militia force that became known as the St. Helena Militia, and which was always available for any emergency.

In 1691, gates were set up across the landing rocks, probably near the present Wharf gates alongside the Customs shed, while at the western end a wall was built from the "fortified line" to the sea, but no such wall like that exists today. Here it is of great interest that the word "line" was already used for the fortifications, because it eventually became a fortified line.

A much more serious mutiny that occurred on 21st April 1693, led to Governor Johnson being shot dead, all the guns at James Fort were spiked, and the guns at nearby Munden's Battery were tumbled on their carriages down the hill. As with other mutinies there were the usual harsh repercussions for those apprehended in the wake of this desperate event.

A traveller who landed at St. Helena in 1703 described the Fort in terms of being a Battery of 40 stout guns with a small Fort where the Governor lives, this latter structure mentioned as being very much decayed. Also in 1703, some more evidence of the early Fort came from Thornton's Map of Jamestown, showing the same triangular shape of Fort as first erected, with an arched entrance to the Fort in roughly the same position as where the main gates to Grand Parade are today. However by this time a platform of guns had been constructed close to the shoreline, and there was a bridge leading to the Landing Place within the present Wharf area. It is very difficult to envisage the early Fort today, because all the waterfront has been raised nearly 10 feet for the roadway with a high sea wall formed all along the front.

At this stage the East India Company had revised their defence strategy to ensure the sealing off of all entrances to valleys wherever it was possible for an enemy to land, as instructed in their first directive of 1684, but not all the valley entrances were to be fortified, as they considered several of these only required a wall to block off access from the sea.

When Governor Roberts directed the building of the Castle in 1708 on the site of the original Fort, this indicated that the form of defences for James Fort had already been altered. The purpose of the Castle was as a residence for the Governor and including administrative facilities, all within the precincts of the Fort. It was only a modest building of one storey with some compartments underneath of low height, but neither it or the present Castle resemble in any way the castles of Britain and Europe.

The first military barracks for the St. Helena Regiments was built in 1709 on the site of the present building that contains the Police Station, Court House, and Library. The Fort continued to evolve as a fortified line with a central bastion which was recorded in 1711 as being seriously damaged by high seas, but again recorded in 1712 as having been repaired. Records of 1717 show only one officer and thirty men stationed at the Fort which would appear to have been inadequately manned in the event of an attack.

A significant development in 1714 was the building of the Castle terrace with a strong high retaining wall which served as a dividing line between the Fort and Castle, while also forming a curtain wall across the valley entrance. In 1727 there were 79 guns on the Line and in front of the Castle, thus indicating that the conversion of James Fort to a fortified line had become a reality.

Then in a Report on the Defences of the Island, dated May 1st 1734, we can get the first impression of the Fort shape that in a broad sense survived until the present time. It stated that the Fort was then defended by two large curtain walls and two "half bastions" as they were termed. The curtain walls may be equated today as those that run the full length of the Fort parallel with the seafront, the outer wall being 6 feet thick with gun embrasures, while the inner one is the high retaining wall as mentioned for the Castle terrace. The east bastion so stated, would have been in the position of the present projection that includes four guns in their embrasures near the existing Cold Stores, while the other bastion was described as "the Mount or front of the Main Fort with 6 very good demi-Culverins" that were mounted at embrasures still existing in the present Mule Yard area.

An old print of 1734 by Lambert and Scott, now in the map Library section of the British Library, confirms the foregoing and also shows access from the Landing Place as then being across a short moat with drawbridge at the eastern end, and through an arched entrance into the fortified line. A further gateway through the inner curtain wall, gave access to Jamestown at a position near the present water tanks or just east of the Castle.

In a Report of 27th April 1742, Governor Lambert referred to the "United Castle" which the Castle was sometimes called and also "Union Castle", as the result of the East India Company merging in 1709 with a rival company to form the United Company, although throughout its entire existence it was always called the East India Company. At the same time, Governor Lambert stated the gun embrasures were too large at the Fort, and also the "dry ditch" needs perfecting, this reference being the first mention made of the dry ditch which eventually became the present well formed moat.

An upper storey was added to the Castle in 1776 giving it the form that basically was to remain for the next 100 years, while the Fort continued to evolve as the fortified line which was similar to that which can be identified today. The Report on Fortifications of the Island by Major James Rennell, dated 26th November 1777, made reference to the Fort as James Line mounting 32 guns on the Line excluding the saluting battery; 24 of the guns were directed towards James Bay.

A splendid sketch made in 1787 by Ozias Humphrey, a contemporary artist of the time, shows the curtain wall and moat complete from east to west almost in the same shape that still exists, except there was no semblance of any road along the seafront, and a large section of the western end gun embrasures shown on his sketch have now been removed. The Governor's House or Castle is easily identified as being similar to the present Castle.

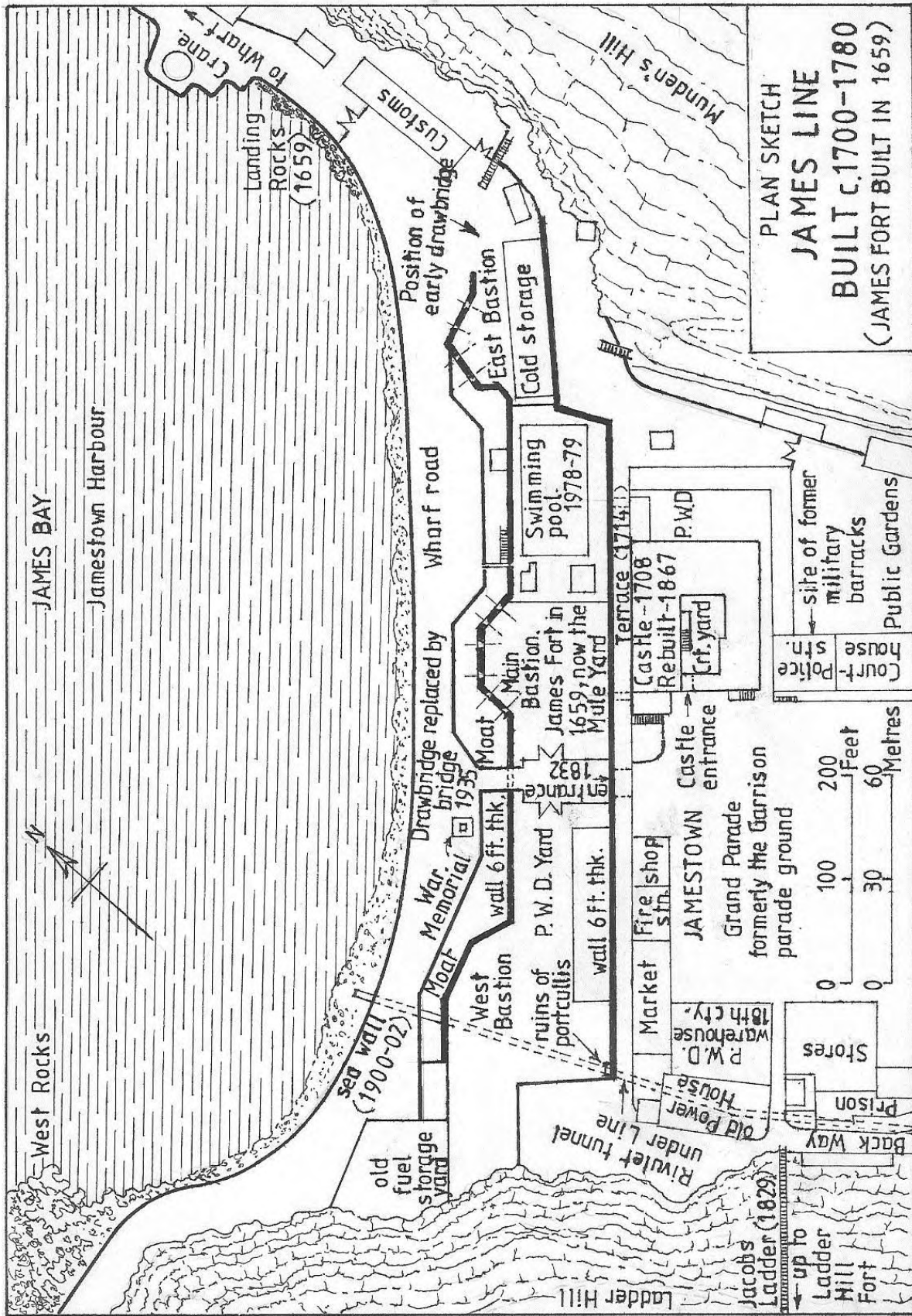
Another sketch by Ozias Humphrey in 1787 gives a good impression of the drawbridge across the moat with a handle mechanism to operate it. In 1808 William Burchell, the naturalist who lived for some years on St. Helena, also completed a sketch of the dry moat which now contains a grove of trees that are quite scenic along the Jamestown seafront. In order to ensure an unhindered flow of the Rivulet into the sea, a tunnel was formed deep under the western end of the inner curtain wall where the relics of a portcullis can still be seen with parts of the raising and lowering mechanism.



Plate 1: Entrance to the Castle, flanked by two 1809 saluting cannons



*Plate 2: James Fort with the Castle and terrace above
The lower portion of Jacobs Ladder is on the cliff face.*



Plan Sketch: James Line

James Fort was still shown by that name on a map drawn by Lieutenant-Colonel Cocks in 1804, and also by the same name on another map in 1815 by Lieutenant R.P. Read. In 1816 a former Governor, Major-General Alexander Beatson, rendered a description of the Fort and Castle that fits in with details of the sketch by Ozias Humphrey as already referred to, but one addition was a large bastion at the western end, and at this time the Fort underwent reconstruction and repairs for the period of Napoleon's captivity. Somewhere, perhaps in the War Office archives, there must be an account of this work which certainly ensured that in addition to having only one entrance via the moat and drawbridge, there was also only one entrance from the Fort to Jamestown through a lower portion of the Castle, at a position east of the present entrance to Grand Parade.

When Napoleon landed on 16th October 1815 he had to pass through both of these entrances on the way to stay only one night at Jamestown before moving up to the Briars Pavilion for two months, and ultimately to his final abode of Longwood House.

During his period of captivity (1815-1821) James Line served as the most vital component of defence for the Fortress of St. Helena which was greatly reinforced by several units of the British Army including the 53rd Regiment of Foot, 20th Regiment of Foot, 66th Regiment of Foot, Royal Engineers, and Royal Artillery.

In defending James Bay from an attack, James Line was supported by the redoubt of Patton's Battery which had been installed on cliffs at the western end; other strong batteries were situated on Ladder Hill and Munden's Point. The Naval Station established at Jamestown Harbour by the Royal Navy ensured that of five warships, two of these were always cruising, while five brigs maintained a day and night patrol around the Island.

A List of Guns for 1825-36 compiled by Lieutenant G.W. Melliss, gave James Line batteries as having a total of 64 guns, consisting of 43 Garris Guns, 12 Carronades, 5 Mortars, and 4 Howitzers. Today at the old Fort there are just 5 guns on display, these being 4 smooth-bore cannons mounted in the embrasures alongside the Cold Stores, and one small gun near the swimming pool, but slightly further afield at the Castle there is another small gun in the courtyard and two splendid bronze saluting cannons at the entrance. In the vicinity of the Wharf, two are projecting out of the quayside as bollards, while at West Rocks one is serving as a shorefast. Adding to the collection, two carriage-mounted Garris guns are displayed outside the Court House and another four guns are in use as traffic buffers around Jamestown. However, fortunately for admirers of old guns, there are quite a number elsewhere around the Island.

Following Napoleon's death on the Island in 1821, all the British Army units were withdrawn in 1822, thus the sole responsibility for defending the Island and maintaining the garrison, reverted to the St. Helena regiments.

Although James Line and the other fortified lines continued to be manned as the main bulwarks of defence for the Island Fortress of St. Helena, there was an increasing awareness that Ladder Hill offered a more strategic elevated position for the defence of James Bay. Therefore while James Line declined in importance, greater attention was given to Ladder Hill Fort. However with the era of peace being maintained in Europe, there was seemingly

no threat of attack against the Fortress of St. Helena. Amongst facilities built by the East India Company during this period were new military barracks at both Jamestown and Ladder Hill.

In 1832 the present western entrance through the inner curtain wall via James Line to Grand Parade and Jamestown, was inaugurated by Governor Charles Dallas who was the last Governor for the East India Company before the Island became a Crown Colony. When the Company began withdrawing from St. Helena in 1834, both the St. Helena Regiments were disbanded and the garrison replaced by the 91st Regiment of Foot which arrived during February 1836 with Major-General Middlemore who became the first Governor of St. Helena under Crown rule. The guns at James Line were then manned by the Royal Artillery.

For a long period after the introduction of Crown rule, there was practically no new defence strategy on St. Helena, but it continued to be garrisoned by British Army units and the St. Helena Militia remained active on a voluntary basis. The preservation of the Island was virtually guaranteed by the regular activities of the Royal Navy, particularly from 1840 when St. Helena became a rehabilitation centre for liberated African slaves who were brought there in captured slave vessels by Royal Navy ships of the West African Squadron which was engaged in the slavery abolition campaign for at least the next 30 years.

On 17th February 1846, James Line received the most serious damage ever recorded in its long history, all resultant from a natural phenomenon known as the "Rollers" which occur annually in that region of the South Atlantic Ocean, but those of 1846 were the most violent on record. The outer curtain wall of the entire Line was destroyed, while the glacis was so torn to pieces as to make it impassable. The Wharf was also destroyed, while 18 slave vessels awaiting trial were torn from their moorings and smashed to pieces, together with all the smaller craft belonging to the Islanders.

This catastrophe certainly marked the point of decline for James Line as an effective fortification. The extensive alterations recorded as having been carried out to the Line from 1856 were certainly as much for converting it to civil usage than for military purposes. The first photographs to have been taken of James Line, by John Lilley in 1863, show the western bastion as having been modified, and the Line generally appears to have been still undergoing repairs. The glacis in front of the moat seemed to be in a shambles with the roadway no more than a mere track between the moat and heaps of rubble on the sea side where only a portion of the present splendid sea wall then existed. The drawbridge across the moat to the 1832 western entrance had been installed, and the outer curtain wall of the Line had been restored, complete with gun embrasures in the central and eastern bastions which indicated that it was being maintained as a fortification. The drawbridge at the eastern end leading to the Wharf had probably been removed at this stage.

A Report on the Island's fortifications in May 1853 by Captain W. C. Stace of the Royal Engineers had stated that James Line was amongst the fortifications to be maintained in time of peace, but with the development of new gun technology from about 1860 its value as a fortification was to be greatly reduced.

Meantime the Castle which was found to have been seriously damaged by white ants was rebuilt in 1867 as the familiar building to be seen today, but continuing ravages by the white ants have necessitated much repair work over a long period.

Some evidence that the Fort or James Line was being phased out, came in 1889 when a tennis court was built by the Royal Engineers on the eastern gun platform. A large platform area at the centre of the Fort, also called the "Mount", eventually served for a long period as a mule yard, but both mules and horses are a rarity on the Island today, and the Mule Yard as it is still termed, is now reserved for special functions such as the Scouts Sports.

The Public Works Department occupied the western sector of the Line as a Plant Yard. In 1935 the drawbridge across the moat was replaced by a permanent bridge built of stone that had been recovered from the demolished Ladder Hill Observatory.

Many of the guns were kept at the Fort until the Second World War period when they were sent to England for melting down as scrap iron. Together with the recent Fisheries Cold Storage plant at the eastern end of the Line and the splendid swimming pool constructed by the Royal Engineers in 1978-79, the scene at James Fort has radically altered over the past 100 years. But the massive 6 feet thick stone wall of the breastwork with some of its gun embrasures and the deep moat are still extending from one end to the other except where broken by the road bridge, all signifying the extent to which this old Fort was developed in order to protect the settlement and the Island.

While James Line was declining from its original status as one of the most vital fortifications for the defence of the Island Fortress, the Castle increased in stature from initially the Governor's residence to become the administrative centre of the Island, and where today the Legislative Council holds regular sessions in the spacious Council Chamber on the second floor. Other facilities at the Castle now include the Printing Office, Savings Bank, and the Archives containing a large collection of St. Helena's records which are a treasure for historians.

Above the arched entrance to the Castle a plaque has the following inscription:-

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 300th ANNIVERSARY OF CAPTAIN JOHN DUTTON'S LANDING
ON THE 5th MAY 1659 FROM WHICH TIME ST. HELENA HAS BEEN A BRITISH POSSESSION.
1659-1959

Anyone who walks along the great expanding stretch of the Castle terrace which is the dividing line between the Fort and the Castle, with the limitless expanse of the vivid blue South Atlantic Ocean in the background, may very likely feel something of the throb of history, both turbulent and otherwise, that have forged St. Helena into one of the world's most historic outposts.

Patton's Battery

In spite of it being the nearest Battery to James Line and Jamestown, Patton's Battery scarcely seems to be known by that name, although most residents are aware that there is an old Battery of some kind up on the cliffs, an observation that cannot be avoided as it is only 96 feet above sea level, and can be quite clearly seen from the Wharf road and Castle terrace.

The name was given in respect of Governor Robert Patton whose term of office with the East India Company was from 1802 to 1807, and it is believed to have been built during this period when Governor Patton concerned himself with improving the fortifications. Without any doubt it was intended as a redoubt Battery for James Fort or James Line as it was later called.

This Battery's position was shown without being named on Barnes Map of 1811, but it was certainly armed and manned during the period of Napoleon's captivity from 1815 to 1821. With its commanding elevated position overlooking Jamestown Harbour, Patton's Battery provided strong support to James Line.



*Plate 3: Patton's Battery, cut into cliffs above West Rocks
Built during the term of Governor Patton (1802-07) as a redoubt for James Line.*

As shown on the Military Map of St. Helena by Captain Edmund Palmer in 1850, Patton's Battery is referred to by that name as a fortification, while as given in a Report on the Fortifications by Captain William Stace of the Royal Engineers in 1853, it was recommended as being one of those that should be maintained during peacetime.

However by the 1880's when James Line had declined in importance, and a new defence strategy had evolved on St. Helena, there was no reference to Patton's Battery as a fortification.

Although its guns have long since been removed, this old Battery has survived right up to the present day. Situated above West Rocks on the lower slopes of Ladder Hill it is a quarter circle form of Battery including one wing wall, all formed on an extensive ledge cut out of the cliff face, and together with the access footway its construction must have been a dangerous project.

The rounded Battery wall which rises two feet above platform level, has an overall height of 6 feet from rock foundations, while the wing wall is 5 feet above the platform and built of roughly squared uncoursed island red stone with lime mortar. A portion of walling has fallen down but otherwise the wall form has maintained its shape. In the platform of stone rubble and earth there are several cobblestone areas that indicate gun emplacements.

The original footway to Patton's Battery joined Shy Road which starts from Back Way in Jamestown, but since Jacobs Ladder was converted to steps in 1871 access to the Battery can be gained by firstly climbing up 102 steps of the Ladder and jumping over to the track along which a way can cautiously be picked to reach the Battery only about 100 yards further on. Although Patton's Battery is a splendid vantage point for viewing all of Jamestown Harbour and the Castle, great vigilance is required both at the Battery site and along the access way to beware of falling stones that can come hurtling down from the precipices above.

Chapter 2

HIGH PEAK FORT

Although there are now no more than a few stones lying on its site, the small Fort that once existed on top of High Peak had such a close link with the early history of the island, as to render it necessary for inclusion in this work. High Peak Fort certainly existed before the second Dutch occupation of St. Helena in 1672, but nothing seems to be known of it before then, and as far as is known there are no existing sketches.

The majestic feature of High Peak rises to a height of 2660 feet above sea level, only about 70 feet lower than Diana's Peak the highest point on the island, and as such it offers a very commanding view particularly to the south down Sandy Bay Valley, to seaward, and also in a westerly direction overlooking the great expanse of High Hill, Swanley Valley, and Old Woman's Valley to the sea. Therefore with this naturally strategic position it must have been a logical choice for an inland Fort, even though when the prevailing south-east trade wind is blowing at its fiercest, anyone and everything on the windward side of High Peak are subjected to a tremendous buffeting.

Towards High Peak in the latter stage of 1672 as is also referred to in the Chapter on Lemon Valley Sector of fortifications, the Dutch invasion force had marched up Swanley Valley led by a traitor named Coxe, but they met no English troops until gaining the open pasture country above the head of Swanley Valley where contact was made with a small English detachment belonging to the garrison of High Peak. In a subsequent sharp skirmish the English were overpowered and the Dutch continued their advance towards much later named Ladder Hill, from where a section of their force descended to storm James Fort where although offering stiff opposition, the English realising that their position was hopeless, retreated to their ships and sailed for Brazil, leaving the Dutch to occupy James Fort with a garrison of 100 men. The island remained in Dutch hands until May 1673 when it was reoccupied by the English, as described in the Chapter on Prosperous Bay.

Subsequently as stated in the Company Records for June 27th 1678, High Peak was mentioned as one of the places where outguards were kept on a day and night rotation system with a view to circumventing any further invasion attempt, the threat of which must have diminished by 1717 because it was then recorded that only one man was stationed at the Peak.

Following the construction of batteries and forts around the coast, together with the walling up of valleys at the sea end, High Peak Fort became of much less importance and there is no reference to it as a fortification in later times. Neither Cocks Map of 1804 or Barnes Map of 1811 show High Peak as a fortification, and nor does the Palmer Military Map of 1850. However the lower vicinity continued to be used as a base and quarters for military personnel. During the years of Napoleon's captivity (1815-21) the ground in front of High Peak House, now called High Peak Cottage, was used as a camp for the troops stationed

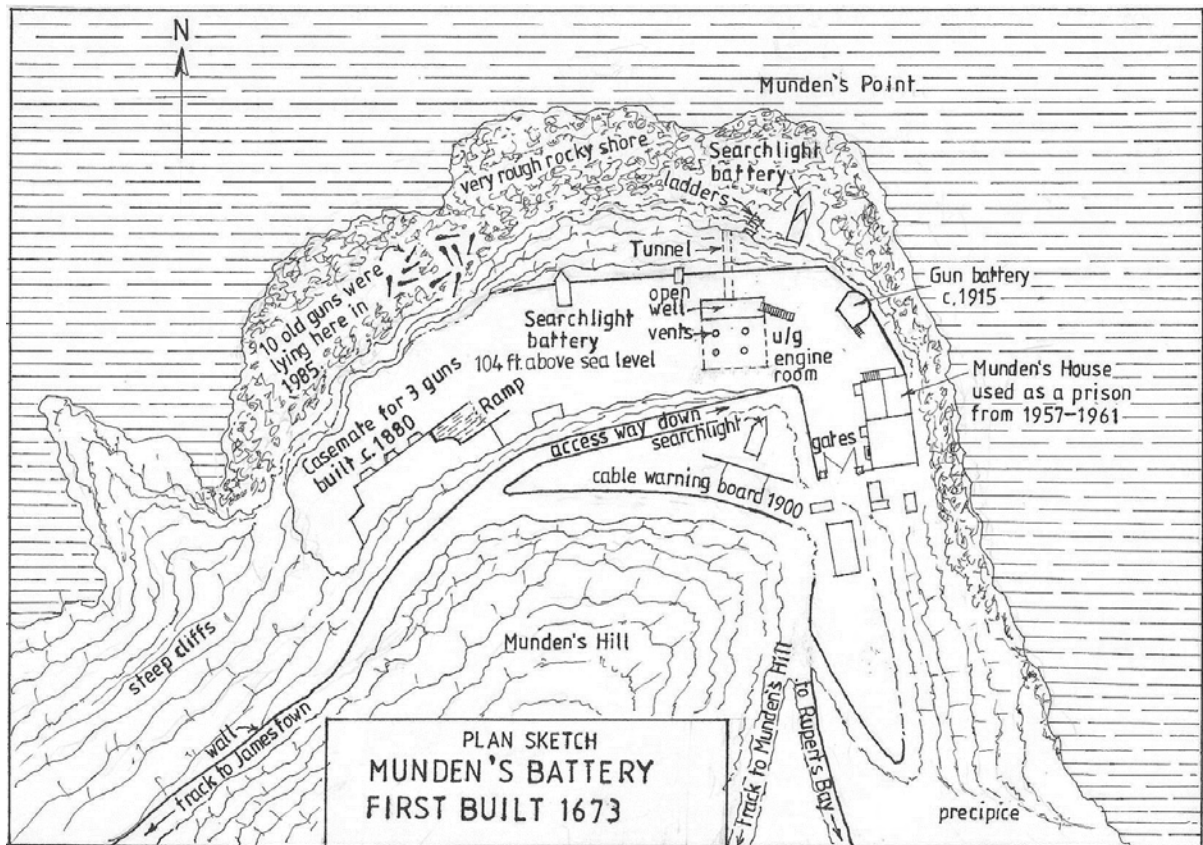
there, from where the sentries furnished for Thompson's Wood Hill and South West Point were drawn.

In his "Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" published in 1883, the local historian Benjamin Grant stated and quote "a cannon stood for several years on High Peak, but it now lies buried on the south side of the Peak". An inspection of High Peak today does not reveal any apparent remains of the old Fort, although a collection of stones buried in the earth mound of the summit could have formed part of it. The narrow tarmac road now skirting High Peak Cottage is lined for a considerable distance with huge thorn trees which must be up to 150 years old, and certainly indicate the early origins of this locality. In the much later times of World War I and II, outguards were also stationed at Peak Farm about half a mile distant from High Peak.

Chapter 3

MUNDEN'S HILL SECTOR

Includes Munden's Battery; Chubb's Lower, Middle, and Upper Batteries Munden's Hill East and West Batteries.



Munden's Battery

After the English reoccupied the island from the Dutch in May 1673 they placed two guns at Munden's Point which had been named to perpetuate Captain Richard Munden who had commanded the English force. This was the beginning of Munden's Battery still known as such, but has undergone many changes in the more than 300 years of its history.

One of the first references in the Records to Munden's Battery was on April 21st 1693 when a mutiny broke out at James Fort. Governor Johnson was shot dead and in addition to the Fort being plundered, the guns and their carriages at Munden's Point were tumbled down the cliffs.

On the day Governor Roberts landed on the island in 1708 he gave instructions to the Engineer for a plan to build a new Battery at Munden's Point. Subsequently the Records state on December 19th 1710 that the "Castle" at Munden's Point was finished. Indeed some very early imaginative sketches do show the Battery of that time as resembling the appearance of a small castle. The facility of a road from James Fort to Munden's Battery was completed in 1713 and this road is still used today as a path.

In 1717 there is another Record giving the information that one officer and four men were stationed at Munden's, and it must be certain that these were men of the St. Helena Regiment. A list of guns for 1727 shows 14 at Munden's but it would have certainly required a larger unit than 5 men to man these effectively.

The Governor, Major Thomas Lambert, said in 1742 that Munden's Point Battery was not low enough down and the rocky cliffs immediately behind it were giving an enemy the chance to give annoyance. This view is in direct opposition to a later report by Captain Mitchell of November 30th 1767 in which he stated that he had planned Munden's for a higher position than he first intended, to avoid having perpendicular rocks at the rear of the Battery. Munden's was then about 80 feet above the sea and he proposed a change for it to be at 150 feet.

Major Rennel in his Report of 26th November 1777 named it as Mundens Fort and in his views and criticism he complained that Munden's was very imperfect and the guns were facing towards the wrong direction. There was a total of 14 guns and 3 mortars at the time and he regretted that so much masonry was so badly arranged.

Despite this adverse report, Munden's Battery or Fort as it was often called, was of vital support to James Line in protecting approaches to the Anchorage at Jamestown, and it had the advantage of elevation.

For the period of Napoleon's captivity when St. Helena was sealed up as a Fortress, it was heavily armed and constantly manned to prevent any unauthorised ships from reaching the Anchorage. During this time no ship of any other nation was allowed to call at St. Helena unless they could prove an emergency, and very few did.

The Read Map of 1815 gave it as Munden's Fort, while in the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 it was termed Munden's Battery and listed as having twelve-24 pounder Garris Guns, three 6-inch Carronades, and two 13-inch mortars, with a total of 17 stone platforms.

From 1834 following the East India Company's withdrawal, Munden's Battery along with most other fortifications suffered a decline, but in 1853 it was included in the Report on Fortifications by Captain Stace of the Royal Engineers as amongst those to be kept in a state of efficiency during peacetime.

With the new defence strategy to protect Jamestown Harbour, Munden's Battery was armed with three 7-inch R.M.L. guns of 7 tons, all of which were mounted in a casemate at the western end of the Battery. During 1881 it was proposed to add seven 10-inch R.M.L. guns of 18 tons to Munden's Battery, as it was considered that the 7-inch guns were ineffective

against armoured ships, but there is no evidence that any of the 18-ton guns ever reached St. Helena. However two 9-inch R.M.L. guns that had been proposed for Munden's Battery, did eventually reach the Island, but were placed at new batteries built on Munden's Hill.

The casemate type of fortification at Munden's Battery was subsequently modified for installing two pedestal-mounted 6-inch R.B.L. guns for which the circular bedplates and holding-down bolts can still be seen. This fortification of casemated form is now the main relic of Munden's Battery. Above the entrance is the monogram VR to signify that it was built during the reign of Queen Victoria. All of the walls consist of large squared stone laid in courses, very well built and still in sound condition. Ceilings for the roof slabs are formed of arched iron plating set between girders which are at 3 feet centres.

Two huge stone pillars are serving as supports to the ceiling span, while at each end of the long chamber a magazine is built into the cliff face. There were no guns used at this Battery during the Second World War, but the St. Helena Rifles were quartered here while serving with the searchlight batteries. Towards the northern end a large underground chamber was formerly an engine room for the generators that supplied electricity for the searchlights.

Access to the engine room is down a flight of concrete steps to a large open well enclosed by stone walling on which a plaque of 1905 can be seen, and suggests that the engine room must have been constructed during this period for earlier searchlight batteries, but it is known that new engines were provided for the generators during the Second World War.

A tunnel which has been formed from the well through to the sea-facing side of the cliffs is neatly lined with brickwork and has concrete steps. On the cliff face a series of built-in iron ladders is providing the descent to a two-tier searchlight battery on a platform above the shoreline. A feature of this battery is the horizontal steel roller shutters which protected the searchlight when not in operation. The installation of this battery was no doubt carried out by the Royal Engineers during the Second World War.

The shore over 100 feet below Munden's Battery was the dumping place for obsolete guns, and in 1985 when there were still ten of these strewn amongst the rocks, they consisted of seven smooth-bore cannons of 6-inch calibre dating early 19th century, and three R.M.L. of 6-inch calibre dating from about 1860. None of these old guns could have been used in the casemated main Munden's Battery, but they were certainly mounted at earlier sites of the Battery.

Returning back up the ladders and through the tunnel to Munden's Battery there is just one more existing old gun battery at the northern end with a raised gun platform and ammunition lockers in its circular base.

Near the main entrance gates is an old two-storey building known as Munden's House which was probably built in the late 19th century as a guardhouse, but the cliff it is situated on has become undermined by the sea and the building is now considered unsafe. A local resident Edward Thomas lived here from 1920 to 1940 which fact he recorded on an old gun lying at Munden's Hill East Battery. During the Second World War while Munden's Point was being

used as a searchlight station, units of the Royal Engineers were billeted at Munden's House. In 1946 it is known that another local resident "Bishop" Young was residing there.

In 1957 Munden's House was chosen as the prison for three political prisoners from Bahrain who were sent into captivity on St. Helena. Munden's Battery was specially modified to include barbed wire screening, security gates, and the entrance to the tunnel was sealed up. Although their sentences had been for 14 years, after 3 years on St. Helena they successfully challenged their detention in court on St. Helena, and were released during 1961, thus ending yet another phase of St. Helena's long tradition in being used as a place of captivity.

Munden's Battery today is merely a historic relic which is serving no other purpose, but it is within easy walking distance from Jamestown and provides a splendid view of the Harbour and the coastline right along to Sugar Loaf Hill. The survival prospects for some of it, particularly Munden's House, are not promising.



*Plate 4: Ten old guns lying on the rocks 100 feet below Munden's Battery
(Photo taken 1985)*



*Plate 5: Munden's Battery, casemate type for 3 guns
Built c. 1880. The original battery was built here in 1673.*

Chubb's Lower Battery

A short distance east of Munden's Point, this old Battery just above Chubb's Rock is a familiar sight to local folks who use the coastal footway around the cliffs of Munden's Hill as a convenient link between Rupert's Bay and Jamestown, but strangely today the very early named Chubb's Rock is rarely if ever referred to as such, and the feature is not named on the modern map of St. Helena. However there were other geographical features on the Island of which the original name has gone out of usage or else it has been changed. Chubb's Rock was named after Edward Chubb who was killed after falling from a ledge of rocks on October 15th 1683.

Beyond any doubt Chubb's Lower Battery is one of the older fortifications, and as long ago as July 1734 Monsieur Gasherie who presented himself as a defence strategist, suggested Chubb's Rock locality as being suitable for a Battery. Some attention must have been given to his views because Governor Lambert, in his Report of 27th April 1742 gave mention that he had been shown where four unmounted guns lay on Chubb's Rock which had been recommended for a Battery to be erected there as it had a very good position, but he added that the sea was a problem constantly breaking very high up on the rocks.

It is almost certain that Chubb's Lower Battery was active by the mid 18th century in forming an extra Battery to bear on ships that were passing to the Anchorage at Jamestown. An old magazine perched on Chubb's Rock was certainly a victim of heavy seas, and today there is only a piece of wall left clinging to the rock.

As can be seen today this Battery has a quarter circle gun platform with breastwork rising from the base up to 12 feet, giving a height of 6 feet above the platform. A gun embrasure is

in the centre section which is stepped down to a low wing wall at both ends, the complete structure being very roughly built.

The massive thickness of about 6 feet for the breastwork wall seems greatly out of proportion to the Battery size, but it was proven to be justified as during the tremendous Rollers of February 1846 the sea rose to such incredible heights that it broke over the Battery to carry away a 24 pounder Carronade and the parapet walls on both sides. It is the present low wing walls that formed the lower part of the parapets washed away, and apparently it was decided to level them off at the lower height rather than rebuild them to get washed away again.

Chubb's Lower Battery did not appear on any of the early 19th century maps but it is proven as being active in 1825-36 by the Melliss' List of Guns which gave three 24 pounder Carronades. The Battery is also shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850.

Thereafter it is not shown in any known records, and must have been phased out well before the end of the 19th century. Its thick wall is convenient for mounting the present navigational beacon.

Chubb's Middle Battery

At 255 feet above sea level on steep slopes above the footpath and directly in line with Chubb's Lower Battery, this old fortification that was known as Chubb's Middle Battery can now only be described as a decrepit ruins. Its origin can confidently be linked to the period during Governor Brooke's term of 1787 to 1801 when he thoroughly reorganised the Island's defences and new batteries were built on higher positions, thus it can be seen that the siting of Chubb's Middle Battery fits in very well with this pattern.

The Battery access track that comes around the cliffs is a higher path to the main one, and it originally extended right along Munden's Hill to Rupert's Bay side as part of a track system linking fortifications, but nearly all of it is now ruined, the path being covered with stones from the crumbled safety wall.

The condition of surrounding cliffs to this Battery can be given as completely hazardous with much loose stone covering the slopes, and great care is needed in approaching the Battery which can be seen as semi-circular in shape with a breastwork wall about 10 feet high and rather poorly built of random size stone seemingly laid with mud mortar, while the gun platform is very rough and overgrown with prickly pears.

An adjacent guardhouse is even more of a ruin, also indicating construction of random stone and mud mortar. The complete installation is reflecting antiquity, but surprisingly it was kept active for a longer period than Chubb's Lower Battery. As shown in the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 it was then armed with one 12 pounder Garris gun.

In 1850 it was shown as a fortification on the Palmer Military Map, and included in 1853 as one of the batteries that should be maintained in peacetime as recommended in a Report on

the Fortifications by Captain W. C. Stace of the Royal Engineers. However probably due to the steep hazardous locality it was soon abandoned. Neither the 1922 Admiralty map or the modern map of St. Helena show this Battery.

Chubb's Upper Battery

If the area surrounding Chubb's Middle Battery is considered hazardous, then that for Chubb's Upper Battery must be graded as positively dangerous. The access for this Battery can only be made by proceeding up Munden's Hill and along a wide track past the more recent Munden's Hill East Battery to pick a way carefully down the cliff slopes.

Chubb's Upper Battery is also in line with the lower two batteries, but it has the advantage of an extra 100 feet in elevation above Chubb's Middle Battery. It can be regarded as part of the same strategy to have batteries at higher positions, although it could be a later built Battery as it is strange that it has a circular shape of which there are very few on the Island, Horse's Head Battery at Sandy Bay being a good example of these.

Chubb's Upper Battery had one 12 pounder Garris gun in the 1825-36 Melliss List of Guns, later shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850, and recommended in 1853 to be maintained during peacetime. All that is left of it today is the circular wall built of stone rubble on top of a cliff ledge, the gun platform covered with loose stones, and some very dangerous crumbling rocky surrounds.

Munden's Hill East Battery

Munden's Hill East Battery is situated on the eastern side of a wide area at the northern end of Munden's Hill where there is considerable evidence of earlier fortifications.

On the ledge of Munden's Hill overlooking Rupert's Line fortifications there are two old ruined battery sites which are firmly believed to be those referred to as Rupert's Lines Hill in the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36. At this early time, Munden's Hill was often wrongly called Rupert's Hill. These two batteries were shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 which included an old magazine and guardhouse that are now both ruins.

Further to this, the present Munden's Hill East Battery superseded another early battery which was one of two built on Munden's Hill in 1886 as part of the new defence strategy to defend Jamestown from sea attack. Lying nearby this Battery is a large R.M.L. (rifled muzzle loading) gun dated 1872 and which was one of two new guns shipped out from England to arrive at St. Helena in June 1888. They were floated ashore on a raft to Munden's Point from where they were hauled up the cliff face and installed in the new batteries on Munden's Hill. This gun of massive proportions with 9-inch calibre, has an enormous breech formed with two reinforcers, and its weight as marked on is 12-1-3-8 which represents 12 tons, one

hundredweight, three quarters, and eight pounds. The cost of these guns as given in the "St. Helena Guardian" at the time, was given as 900 pounds (sterling) each, and their carriages 238 pounds each. The R.M.L. guns which were developed from about 1860, introduced a new technology in armaments with much greater range for their projectiles, but as a traversing track was required for their carriage, they needed a substantial operating area and could never have been used in the present Battery.



Plate 6: View of north-west coast showing Chubb's Rock as the nearest point with Chubb's Lower Battery directly above. Rupert's Bay is adjacent, and Sugar Loaf Hill in the far distance.

South Atlantic Fortress



Plate 7: Chubb's Lower Battery
The lower walls on each wing were smashed down by the Rollers of 1846.



Plate 8: Munden's Hill West Battery, identical to the East Battery



Plate 9: Munden's Hill East Battery with old gun nearby dated 1872, but it was not mounted in this Battery which had a later type pedestal mounted gun in its circular platform.

By the end of the 19th century the R.M.L. guns had almost become obsolete, and probably about the time of the 1914-18 World War the batteries on Munden's Hill were rebuilt to mount R.B.L. (rifled breech loading) guns of 6-inch calibre which were manned for a long period by the Royal Marines who formed the garrison on St. Helena from 1911.

As seen today this Battery of comparatively modern form, has a circular sunken platform in which the holding down bolts can still be seen for mounting the pedestal type gun. The breastwork of stone blocks is semi-circular in shape, spayed down at the front and overlaid with concrete or cement rendering. Several ammunition lockers are positioned around the platform rear, while shells were raised by two hand-operated conveyors from underground magazines. Access to the underground compartments is via a well constructed long flight of concrete steps flanked by a splendid masonry wall. It is a very extensive arrangement of rooms and compartments all in very good order, and much of the conveyor equipment including the chain drive and manual operating handle for the shell hoists are still intact.

A short distance from the Battery is a very small covered structure containing a stone pillar that was used for mounting some range-finding apparatus to determine directional bearings for the gun. This Battery was not used during the Second World War, but it is very well preserved, and rather unfortunate for historic reasons that its gun was taken away, even though this is partially compensated by the existence of the earlier old R.M.L. gun lying nearby.

A small three-roomed building with a chimney is within 50 yards of the Battery, and was probably built as quarters late 19th century when the earlier battery was active. Edward Thomas has recorded on the old gun that he lived in these quarters from 1940-71.

In August 1971 one of the children was killed in a fall over the nearby cliffs, but otherwise there is no earlier record and the building has not been occupied for many years.

Munden's Hill West Battery

Within 200 yards of the East Battery, this Battery on the western side is almost identical, even to the extent of having the same type of old R.M.L. gun lying nearby, except its date in this case is 1865.

The position of the West Battery gave it an almost perfect bearing on Jamestown Harbour and approaches.

The only sign of any earlier fortification here is a small circular platform with a low perimeter wall, presently having a beacon in the centre inscribed H.M.S. LOWESTOFT 1920 commemorating the Admiralty survey of the Island carried out by this ship during that year. If this platform was once a battery it might have been the one shown for the same locality on the Palmer Military Map of 1850.

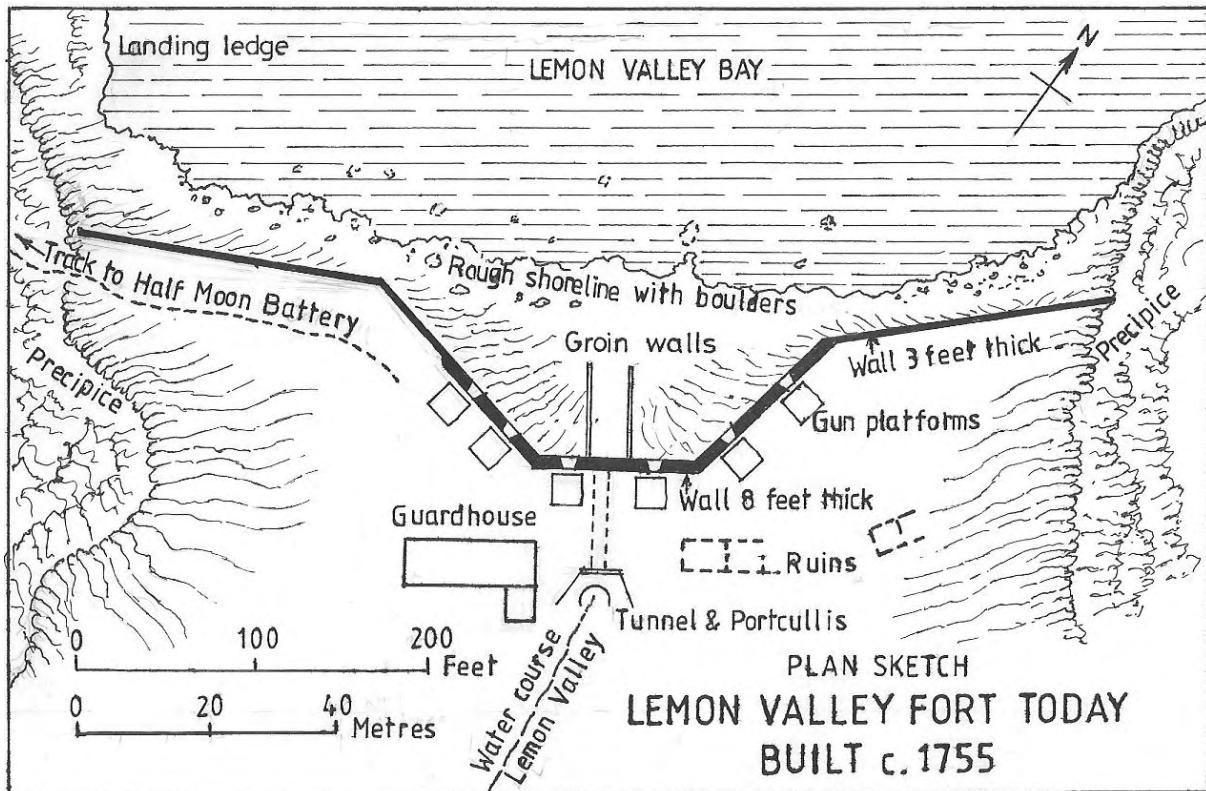
In an identical manner as for the East Battery, the West Battery was built on the same site to replace the fortification in which the old 1865 R.M.L. gun was mounted, but again as for the East Battery its later pedestal-mounted R.B.L. gun has been removed.

The design and construction of the West Battery is identical in every way with that of the East Battery.

Chapter 4

LEMON VALLEY SECTOR

Includes Lemon Valley Fort, Half Moon Battery, Friar's Ridge Battery, and High Point Battery.



Lemon Valley Fort

As one of the most spectacular scenic features of the island, Lemon Valley sweeps down to join Sarah's Valley and then meets the sea at Lemon Valley Bay where some of the earliest fortifications were built.

In the latter half of 1672 the Dutch attempted a landing at Lemon Valley in the vicinity of where the present Fort was later built, but from the precipices on either side of the Valley the English defenders heaved down such massive showers of boulders and stones that compelled the Dutch to retreat back to their ships which afterwards proceeded to Bennet's Point nearly 3 miles along the coast. On landing there they marched up Swanley Valley to engage a small force of English troops near High Peak Fort and subsequently occupied James Fort. (See Chapter on High Peak Fort)



Plate 10: Lemon Valley Fort. Curtain wall and Guard House.



Plate 11: View of Lemon Valley Bay with Fort and Guard House at centre.

Following the island being retaken from the Dutch in 1673, Lemon Valley was selected as one of the places that urgently needed fortifying against any attempt by an enemy to land. Island Records of 27th June 1678 show that there were 5 guns at Spragues, the name by which the Fort was known at that time, and it was further stated that outguards kept there for several years should be maintained. The John Seller Maps of 1675 and 1685, and the Philip Lea Map of 1700, all named it Bearkley's Platform.

From the Consultations of 24th September 1707, approval had been given by the Engineer, John George Newman, for considerable improvements to the defences which were now referred to as Lemon Valley Fort. A platform of 3 guns was laid out on the east side of the Valley, to include a house of 30 feet by 10 feet with a chimney, and a powder room or magazine at the rear. On the west side of the Valley, a platform of two guns and a small room to hold cartridges of powder were completed. Mention was made that as both these installations were on high ground of little hills, they would be clear from any floods and should certainly make the place impregnable.

From the above description it is certain that the present Fort with its splendid well built curtain wall from end to end across the Valley entrance, did not exist then, and according to the Records the force allocated at that time for the defence of Lemon Valley consisted of one officer and two soldiers, which was a very slender number of personnel to hold the Fort. At that time all personnel and supplies must have been brought in by longboat to the hazardous landing rocks nearby, as the overland route was very long and exceedingly difficult; even today it is no mean achievement to get down on foot to Lemon Valley.

Reflected from Island Records of 1717, Lemon Valley Fort was then described as decayed and ruined, the platform having been broken down for the past 6 years. It was a common watering place for ships and all the sailors knew the weakness of this Fort. Consequently after only 10 years from the previously mentioned new works, the Fort had been reduced to such a sorry state. In the same year a locality just up the Valley from the Fort was used to quarantine victims of smallpox which had broken out amongst the slaves who had just been brought from Madagascar, and later a Quarantine Station was built there but is now disused and derelict.

By 1727 the guns at Lemon Valley Fort had been reduced to four, and subsequently in a Report on the Defences of the Island dated 1st May 1734, it was recorded that as all the guns at Lemon Valley were flamed and honeycombed they were taken away and placed on the West Rocks of Jamestown Harbour as shorefasts, one of which can be seen to this day, with its muzzle embedded into the rock.

Governor Lambert said in his Report on the Fortifications of 27th April 1742 that Lemon Valley was a place of great dangers and the Fort was insufficient to prevent an enemy; he suggested a breast-work to be joined to the hills on both sides to seal up access to the Valley, but for a long time no attention was given to any of his recommendations and the Fort continued to deteriorate. In October 1753 the Guard House was washed away by an unusual torrent of water, this being one of the buildings mentioned earlier as erected in 1707 and considered to be clear of any floods.

We now come to the period of revival and final construction of the Fort into the form that exists today, this having been achieved before a Report on the Fortifications dated 26th November 1777 by Major J. Rennellin which Lemon Valley was described as being closed up by a fortified line on a better construction than any of the others. The Fort mounted 6 guns, and it was suggested by Major Rennell that a small redoubt at the upper

end of the Valley would have been a better means of defence, an idea that was later adopted.

An inspection of the Fort today will soon reveal that it is a sound very well built stone structure, and apart from James Fort it is in a far better condition than any of the other fortified Lines on the island. The long curtain wall of over 100 yards in length completely closes up the Valley entrance except for small upper portions of the extremities at both ends now broken through to give access to the shore which at some points is up to 30 feet below. Starting at 2 feet thick at both ends the wall extends across to the massive recessed fortified main section which has a splayed angled wall containing two embrasures in each side, while the 9 feet thick centre wall section also has two gun embrasures making a total of six embrasures which ties in with Major Rennel's Report of 1777 giving the number of guns as six.

The gun emplacements along the terrace are paved with square Portland stone slabs, and the sills of each embrasure are also formed of this type stone. All the walling is very well executed with local stone of random size laid in lime mortar but restoration work has used cement mortar. A nicely built arched storm water tunnel about 6 feet high, passes centrally under the Fort with a groin wall each side forming a spillway on the sea side, from where there does not seem at first any means to have prevented anyone from sneaking into the Fort via the storm water tunnel, but as there is a slot hole in the terrace immediately above the tunnel, there must have been a portcullis to seal off this loophole.

On the Fort terrace, a substantial stone building including a fireplace, was the Guard House, still in reasonably sound condition except the corrugated iron roof is holed from corrosion, and no doors or windows exist. Adjoining the rear of this building, a small extension room with chimney is in ruins as are some other old buildings along the terrace. In addition to the old Quarantine Station referred to, there are a considerable number of other ruins up the Valley.

Lemon Valley Fort overlooks a small stretch of shingle covered shore-line that could scarcely be called a beach, and is dangerous for swimming due to a treacherous swell and large numbers of submerged rocks. The south-west side of the shore beneath massive cliffs, leads to a rock strewn area where a small concrete landing place has been formed, but this can only be used in calm weather.

In 1816 Lemon Valley Bay was described by the former Governor, Major-General Alexander Beatson, as being one of the principal landing places on the leeward coast and of it being well fortified. Also by this time Lemon Valley Fort was provided with flanking batteries up the Valley and on nearby cliffs, all of which are described separately in this Chapter.

The St. Helena Regiments had a prominent part in manning the Fort, and the 20th Foot Regiment from England were stationed there in 1819. For the period 1825-36 the Fort was listed as having six 9-pounder Garris guns and three 18-pounder Carronades, with 6 stone platforms. For a number of years from 1840 the locality just up the Valley was used as a Depot for Liberated African slaves who were landed at Lemon Valley Bay by the Royal Navy as a phase of their anti-slavery campaign at sea. During this period the Fort was not

manned, but in 1853 the Report on Fortifications by Captain W. C. Stace of the Royal Engineers recommended that the Battery and Lines at Lemon's Bay (as he termed it) should be maintained during peacetime. He also mentioned that the guns and carriages of Lemon's Bay Lines were then in storage, and it seems that Lemon Valley Fort was never restored as an active fortification.

Today there are no guns to highlight Lemon Valley Fort, but for those who would undertake the scenic track walk via Sarah's Valley to Lemon Valley Bay, they will very likely feel it was well worth the effort.

Half Moon Battery

At 158 above sea level on a projecting ledge of enormous cliffs along the western side of Lemon Valley Bay, this Battery was strategically situated to give flanking fire for Lemon Valley Fort from where it is accessible up a rough but passable track cut into the cliff face.



Plate 12: Half Moon Battery on cliffs above the western side of Lemon Valley Bay.

This is certainly a later installation than Lemon Valley Fort because it is not mentioned in Major Rennell's Report of 1777. Although not named as such, it fits in with a description as one of the flanking batteries for forts mentioned by Governor Beatson whose term of office was from 1808 to 1813, and its style suits this period. In 1825-36 it was armed with four 18-pounder Garris guns and later shown as an active battery on the Palmer Military Map of 1850. Surprisingly in 1881 it was recorded as being the only armed outlying battery, but considered dangerous from falling rocks and recommended to be abandoned. At that time it could only mount one of the later type R.M.L. 7-inch guns.

Of the older style batteries on the Island, Half Moon Battery is one of the neatest and better constructed, although it is not nearly on such a grand scale as another battery of the same name at Banks Lines. Consisting of two gun emplacements within twin outer and inner circular platforms of 25 feet and 20 feet diameters respectively, these each have a breastwork surround which is eight feet thick stone walling, the crest being flagged with a combination of Portland and local stone. The walls several feet high, consist of local red and blue stone built directly up from rock base. Both gun emplacements include iron traversing tracks set into the platform for enabling the guns to be rotated through a wide arc. There are now no guns on display at this Battery.

At a short distance from the Battery, back along the access track, two magazine caverns have been cut into the cliff face. One of these is divided to give two compartments which are connected by a hatch opening that was most likely used for serving out powder cartridges. Also along the track and embedded at intervals in the cliff face are the series of large iron rings which were used as a facility for the staggering exercise of hauling up the guns.

Apart from its historic aspect, Half Moon Battery is sited in an area that is truly a scenic spectacular, with enormous chocolate coloured cliffs contrasting against the blue sea, along a great coastal sweep as far as the eye can see. From the outermost extremity of the Battery it is possible to see a small portion of Lemon Valley Fort far below to the east, while nearby on the west view is Red Rock with Long Ledge directly behind.

Anyone who can manage the walk down to Lemon Valley Fort must not fail to also visit Half Moon Battery.

Friar's Ridge Battery

Situated well down on the Lemon Valley side of Friar's Ridge, this Battery is shown but not named on Cocks Map of 1804, and also Barnes Map of 1811. The Palmer Military Map of 1850 confirms the name, while much later when it was no longer operational, the Admiralty Map of 1922 simply labels it as an "old Battery". The modern Map of St. Helena does not show it.

With its commanding position overlooking Lemon Valley Fort, it seems obvious that the Battery was sited to repel an enemy who might over-run the Fort and attack up the Valley. Although it has a very good elevation of 804 feet above sea level, the range would have been too great to be effective against any ship in Lemon Valley Bay, especially with the Carronade type of gun that is now a relic at the Battery.

At the present time Friar's Ridge Battery is difficult to locate, as it is concealed to a large extent by surrounding prickly pear bushes, and even high up on Horse Pasture from the opposite side of Lemon Valley it is virtually impossible to pick it out on the rocky slopes of Friar's Ridge. There does not seem to have ever been any access from Lemon Valley, due to steep cliffs on the Valley face. The present access track which may have always been the method of getting there, is via Cleugh's Plain down to Friar's Valley, and then up a track via Matty's Old House, (now a ruins) to Friar's Ridge or Isaac's Hill as it seems to be known

locally at that end, from where there is no track and one just has to look for the Battery down through the aloes and prickly pears. It must have been a very formidable exercise getting military supplies there when the Battery was operational.

The Battery has a half round shape with the breastwork consisting of stone walling about 5 feet high, up from solid rock, and it originally had a wooden gun platform. Much of the stonework has come loose and it appears the prickly pears could eventually take over this site. The old Carronade muzzle loading gun which has been turned on its side, is a veritable antique, with very distinct markings which specify that it is a 12 pounder, the date 1805 is clearly marked under the Crown, and the calibre is 4 inches. Although outwardly corroded, it is otherwise in good condition. The barrel of between 3 and 4 feet long, has a means of chain adjustment for elevation and is attached to a very old fashioned carriage frame with a curved rear portion, the overall height of gun and carriage being about 3 feet but there is no sign of any wheels.

It is unfortunate that due to difficulty of access, very few people are likely to visit Friar's Ridge Battery which is an interesting relic of St. Helena's military history.



*Plate 13: Friar's Ridge Battery looking towards Lemon Valley Bay.
Old 12 pounder Carronade Gun with carriage turned on its side is dated 1805.*

High Point Battery²

² Footnote on High Point Battery:-

After the original old gun was found in dense undergrowth far below the battery, a plan was made to have it lifted by helicopter and returned to the battery. This was carried out by a helicopter from H.M.S. Monmouth during her visit to the island in November 1997 and the gun was successfully landed at the battery, but remounting it is a problem that still has to be solved.

Overlooking the upper end of Lemon Valley, the origins of this Battery seem to fit the recommendations by Major Rennell in his Report of 1777 that such a redoubt out of range of ships' guns would be a better means of defence, and certainly the gun that was here had a bearing directly down the Valley to bombard any attacker, who would have been completely exposed.

Very little record appears for High Point Battery, but it is an early type with half round shape. On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 it is shown together with a spot height of 1000 feet above sea level. There is no reference to it as a Battery on the 1922 Admiralty Map, and the modern Map only gives reference to the geographical feature of High Point.

From the road to Thompson's Hill there is an access track extending down the hill and then along a short ridge with very rocky outcrops to High Point and the Battery site which is on top of a precipice. The breastwork of random size stone is a 2 feet thick wall about 4 feet in height off the rock base, and was certainly higher, as some layers of stone have fallen off. Just a few yards away are the ruins of an old guard house. According to the Melliss List of 1825-36, this Battery had one platform for a 12 pounder Garris Gun. The author was told that a gun was on High Point Battery until recent years, but is believed to have been pushed over the precipice and may well be buried in the undergrowth far below.

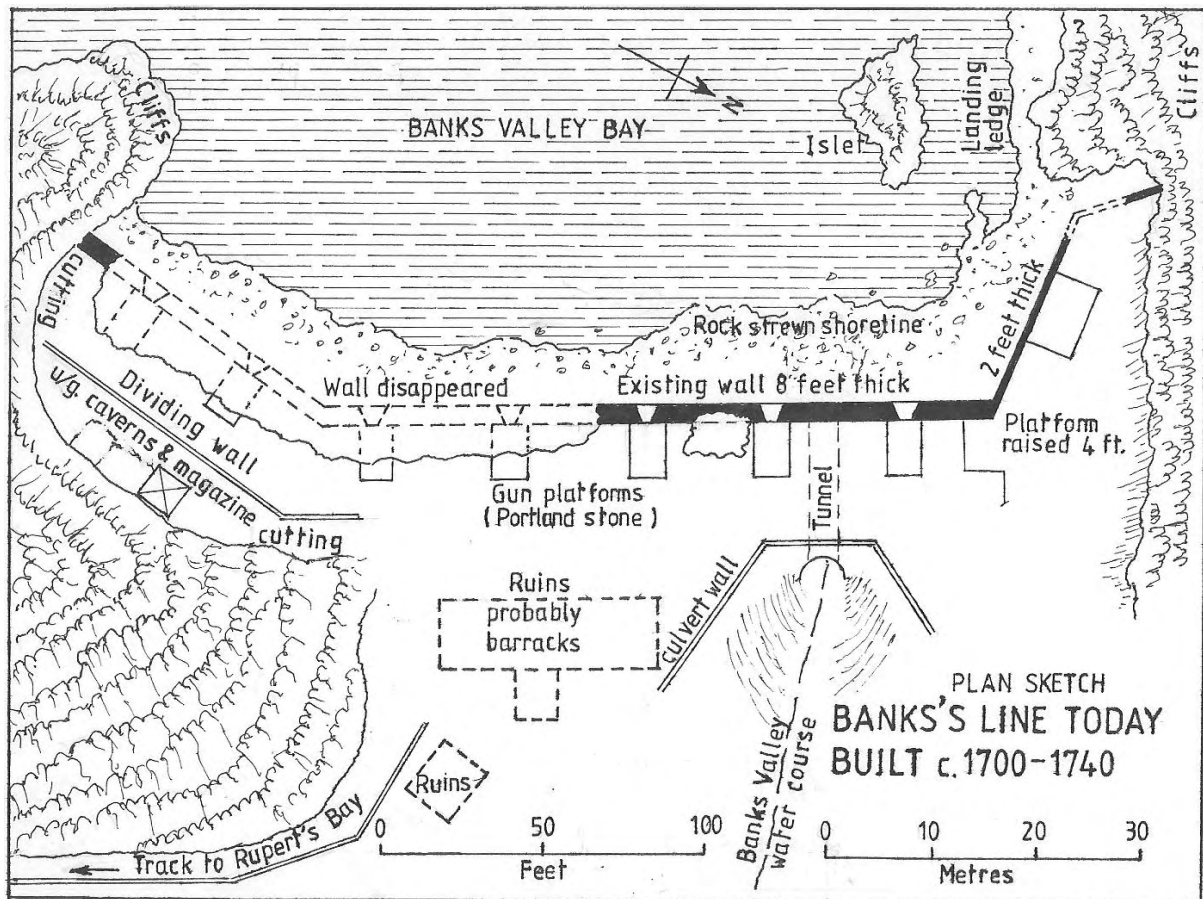
As it seems to be scarcely known of, and due to its overgrown crumbling site, with no gun there to serve as an attraction, there are very few visitors to High Point Battery, but with the exceptionally commanding position giving such splendid scenic views down the Valley it deserves some interest.

Chapter 5

BANKS LINES

Consisting of Banks Platform, Half Moon Battery, Middle Point Battery, Repulse Point Battery, Buttermilk Point Upper and Lower Batteries.

(Including sections on Sugar Loaf Hill and Flagstaff Bay)



Banks Platform

Known originally as "Banckes Platform" the first reference to it is in the Records of 27th June 1678 when mention was made that it had 3 guns, and outguards were stationed there on a day and night rotation system. Shown on Sellers Map of 1682 there is no doubt that it was the site of the first fortification in this sector of the island, but the ultimate thick curtain wall a relic of which can be seen today, was not completed until later years.

Banks Valley is another of the island's great carved features that plunge down to meet the sea via a narrow access which in this case is only about 80 yards wide at the foot of the Valley. In spite of an extremely rugged shoreline of towering cliffs, the first possible landing place after leaving Turks Cap Bay on the eastern side of the island, is situated here, and this was one of the reasons for fortifying Banks Valley which eventually included a series of batteries along the coast to form the complete fortifications known as Banks Lines.

A further vital consideration in siting Banks Platform lay in its strategic position relative to ships approaching Jamestown Anchorage. The prevailing south-easterly trade winds enforced the tactical necessity of all ships bearing in towards the island from an easterly direction along the north coast past Flagstaff Bay, then changing their course to haul round the north-east side from where they would normally have sufficient way to make Jamestown Anchorage without an additional manoeuvre. Therefore they could not avoid passing opposite Banks Platform, and furthermore if an error of judgment had been made in keeping too far out from the coast, they would have great difficulty in beating back against the wind to reach the Anchorage.

On 1st June 1706 two large French ships sailing under Dutch colours and commanded by a Monsieur Desduguires, were approaching the island. By mid-morning they had reached a point opposite Banks's which had been directed by the Governor, Captain Poirier, that all ships must send a boat there before they attempted to enter the Roads. As was customary a gun was fired from the Battery as a warning, whereupon the ships lowered their topsails and saluted with 5 guns. However their real intention soon became clear as one of them stood in towards an English ship, the "Queen" and poured in a volley of small-arms fire, which was replied to by a broadside, but the "Queen" was taken and cut loose from her cables. Another English ship, the "Dover" was captured at the same time. Although the Batteries at Banks's were ordered to fire on the ships which had hauled down the Dutch flag to display French colours, there was insufficient powder and match at hand, and many of the sponges did not fit the guns. After firing a few broadsides at the Batteries the French ships with their English prizes were soon out of range. After this disastrous setback the Governor reinforced his orders that no ship whatever, was to pass Banks Battery without previously sending in a boat for requesting permission from the Governor to land.

Records of 1st November 1715 state that the Governor, Isaac Pyke, went to see "Bankses Fort" as he termed it, said to be not large and containing 4 guns, but it was thought sufficient with 10 men to keep off 500 or more from landing. From the foregoing it is obvious that the Platform had not yet been constructed to its final extent. The Governor thought it should be kept in tolerable order, but it must have been a trial for the personnel stationed there, as it was reported rats were a great problem, often destroying the pouches of soldiers who wore them while they were asleep. Not that there were many on duty at Bankses, as a Record of 1717 shows that only 2 officers and 5 men were there, this including for King William's Fort (see Half Moon Battery) and Sugar Loaf Hill.

In 1727 the guns at Banks Platform had been increased to seven which indicates that the works had at least been extended, but it is necessary to introduce a Report on the Island Defences dated 1st May 1734 which states that "Bankses Platform was the first to be built there", all of this firmly giving the idea that most of the Platform, relics of which can be seen

today, were built across the Valley by this time but it is known that Governor Jenkins in 1740 was involved with a phase of the construction. Confirmation of its final form comes from the Report by Major Rennell on 26th November 1777 when he described the Banks Valley Platform as not more than 80 yards wide and completely shut up towards the sea by a Battery of 7 guns. He commended the Battery as being placed with great judgment, as its whole line of fire was within point blank range of ships that haul round Butter-milk Point for Ruperts or James Bay.



Plate 14: The ruins of Banks Platform, with only about one third of the original curtain wall remaining.



*Plate 15: Old Garris Guns on Banks Platform.
Two dates shown are 1801 and 1806.*

In July 1787 a large quantity of limestone discovered in Banks Valley was of a better quality than that at Sandy Bay, and this led to the construction of lime kilns, ruins of which can still be seen about 200 yards up the Valley from the Platform. Although the lime as an essential constituent of good mortar was too late for use in the already completed Banks Platform, other fortifications of Banks Line that were to be built later, benefited greatly.

Banks Platform was shown on Cocks Map of 1804 and Barnes Map of 1811 while on the Read Map of 1815 it was called Banks Battery. According to the Melliss List of 1825-36, the guns at Banks Platform then consisted of seven 32 pounder Garris Guns and three 12 pounder Carronades, the number of stone platforms given as ten. It is doubtful if Banks Platform was operational after the mid 19th Century, and it is not named on the Palmer Military Map of 1850, although Banks Lines was prominently shown.

The present condition of this old fortification can only be described as ruinous, because there is only about one third of the original curtain wall remaining, the other having been smashed down and washed away by heavy seas, a process of elimination which has probably been allowed to continue unhindered for at least the past 100 years.

However it is still possible to gain a reasonable impression of the original installation which basically consisted of an 8 feet thick curtain wall stretching completely across the Valley entrance, with the north end flanked by a narrow wall angled to the cliffs. The main wall was about 15 feet high above the foreshore, and contained a series of gun embrasures but there are only two surviving. Most of the main platform is still intact in spite of serious erosion where the curtain wall has been destroyed, and several gun emplacements paved with Portland stone slabs are still in fair condition. An arched storm water tunnel runs beneath the platform at the northern end where a portcullis was installed but all the stonework now in a state of ruin.

At the southern end of the platform, several caverns have been built into the cliff to serve as magazines and a furnace for heating shot. An array of old ruined stone buildings are situated at the rear, indicating that there were considerable ancillary facilities which must have included living quarters.

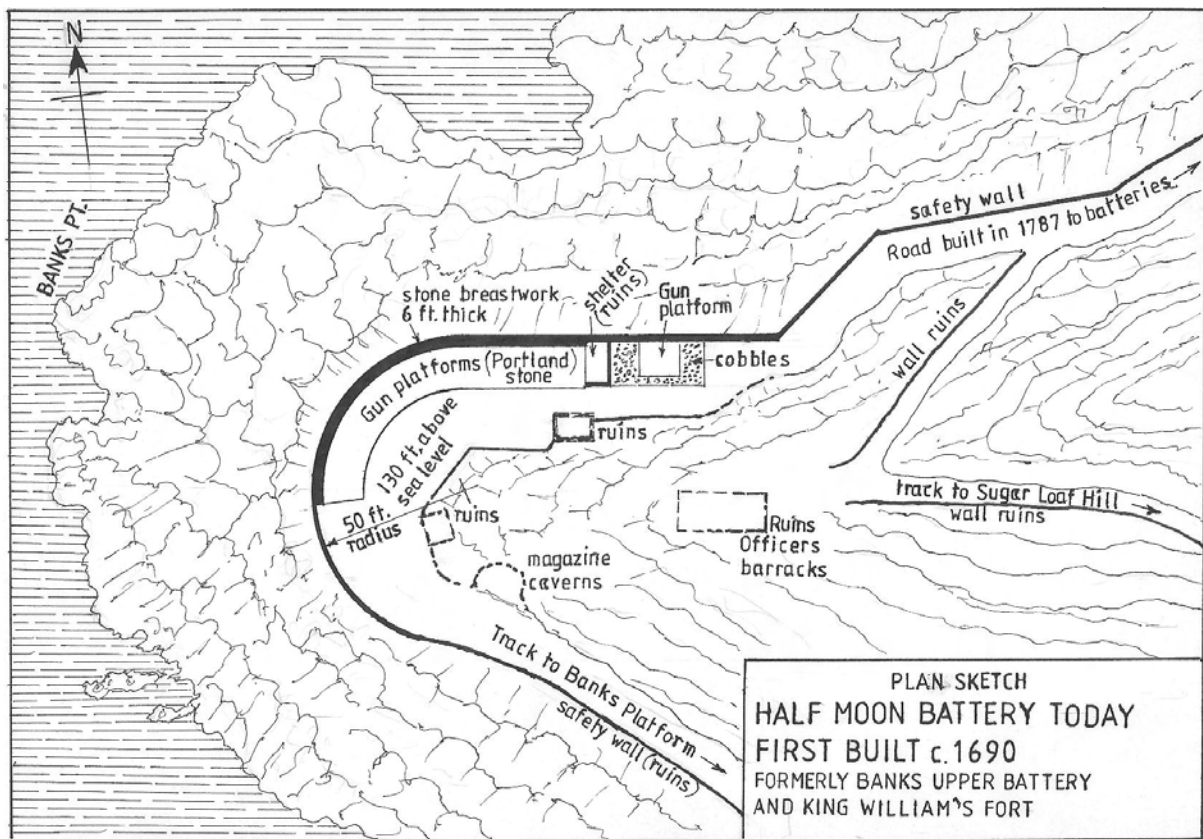
There are a total of 10 old guns lying at or near the Platform. These include 8 on the Platform, and two that are partly covered by shingles on the shore. They are all Garris type guns, mostly about 10 feet long and all have a calibre of 6 inches. Although they are still in sound condition, surface corrosion has concealed the dates on all but two which were read as 1801 and 1806.

The landing place below high cliffs at the northern end of Banks Platform, is a narrow ledge with a channel between it and a small rocky islet. The fortification must have been served by longboat during its long history, as although a foot track to Ruperts Bay has probably existed since the first construction was begun, it is a long arduous route via Bloody Bridge, and would have been a tortuous exercise for bringing in supplies overland.

From a historical point of view it is regrettable that the remaining portion of Banks Platform is in real danger from being demolished by the sea, and only immediate restoration work can save it.

Half Moon Battery

Known for a long time as Half Moon Battery this fortification should not be confused with another battery of the same name at Lemon Valley Bay. With its splendid rounded sweep of breastwork walling, it is the largest Battery on the island and also displaying some outstanding examples of the stonemason's craft. Situated on the tip of Banks Point 130 feet above the sea it offers an uninterrupted view of ocean expanse.



First mentioned in the Records of 1693, the original name of King William's Fort was given in respect of King William III during whose reign from 1688 - 1702 it was constructed. It also seems to have been called at one stage the King William and Queen Mary Fort, but most of the early records refer to it simply as King William's Fort. Due to the difficulty of challenging ships from Banks Platform, the necessity of a more strategic Battery for this purpose brought about the development of King William's Fort on the high point 50 yards further out than the Platform.

It is referred to in the Records of 1717, and again in a Report of the Island. Defences dated 1st May 1734, describing King William's Fort as "being built on the hill above Bankes Platform which was the first to be built there". In Major Rennell's Report of 26th November 1777 this fortification had lost its original name of King William's Fort and was named Bank's

Upper Battery(also called Purling's Battery). He mentioned it as being semicircular and mounting 6 guns, but not well contrived because "unless a ship is becalmed underneath it, it is likely to do her little damage". However the Battery continued to be used as the point for hailing ships until Banks Line was further extended by later built batteries.

The present name of Half Moon Battery does not seem to appear until the 19th century when it was referred to as such in the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 which gave it as being well fortified with eight 18 pounder, and one 9 pounder Garris Guns, and two 18 pounder Carronades, all on 11 stone platforms, but there are now no guns at this Battery. Half Moon Battery is prominently shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 and might have been kept operational for a longer period than Banks Platform, as in spite of all the nearby buildings being in ruins they are not all in such a fallen down condition as those built at the Platform.



Plate 16: Half Moon Battery on Banks Point and Platform ruins in Banks Valley Bay

The Battery itself can scarcely be described as anything resembling a ruins, in fact it justifies being considered as an example of exceptionally good quality stonework, even though some adjoining buildings are in ruins. The curving sweep of breastwork walling some 6 feet thick, is about two feet above platform level and has a sloping crest featuring string courses of stonework that have been specially shaped to the angle. Consisting of squared stone laid in courses, the wall rises up to 25 feet above rock base where it is splayed probably to at least 8 feet thick.

Based on a radius of 50 feet the spacious platform has a 15 feet wide layer of Portland stone slabs for gun positions all around the inside of breastwork. A small walled in gun emplacement is situated on a separate raised platform at the northern end. The only defective area of the Battery is at the south end where a section of wall has crumbled down to expose the Portland stone slabs under which the earth has been eroded away, this requiring urgent restoration. Magazines for the Battery can be seen nearby in caverns which

have been hacked out of the cliff, and above are a considerable number of ruined buildings one of which was an officers' quarters, all giving evidence that a considerable complex once existed. The old track to Sugar Loaf Hill and Flagstaff Bay runs along the hill from here to pass above Banks Platform. Another much wider footpath from the Battery continues along the coast to more batteries of Banks Lines described in the following sections.

Half Moon Battery is a superb example of its type, and although only seen at present by a few visitors and passing fishermen, its preservation is justified as a valuable military relic.



Plate 17: Half Moon Battery

Middle Point Battery

Proceeding north along the coastal path from Half Moon Battery, the Middle Point Battery is only about 200 yards distant, and its purpose was to give supporting fire in the event of any ship refusing to send in their boat for permission to proceed.

Of 22 feet diameter semicircular shape, the Battery wall is based directly on cliff rock, and rises to 4 feet above platform level but there is no gun embrasure in the wall.

It is almost certain that this Battery was built in 1778 during the same period as Buttermilk Point Batteries. There is no apparent reference to it in any of the Reports on Defences, except the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 which gave it as having one 18 pounder Howitzer with a single platform.

This Battery is in a fairly well preserved condition.

Repulse Point Battery

Repulse Point Battery is the next Battery to be reached after Middle Point about 200 yards further, and is of a similar level and size. Without any reference in the Records the origins of this Battery can also be tied to the same period of 1778 as for Buttermilk Point Battery.

The semicircular breastwork is a 3 feet thick wall at the crest, and splayed to about 5 feet thick at the base. Concentric with the wall there is a stone traversing track in the earth filled platform which is 3 feet below the wall crest, and as with Middle Point Battery there is no gun embrasure. The Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 shows this Battery with one 18 pounder Garriss Gun on one single platform but no gun there now.

Although its adjacent retaining wall with the walled up footpath is badly crumbled, Repulse Point Battery is in good order.



Plate 18: Repulse Point Battery

Buttermilk Point Upper and Lower Batteries

The origins of Buttermilk Point Batteries are shown in the Records of October 5th 1778 when Captain Pierie suggested a road from Banks's to Buttermilk Point and a Battery to be constructed there. In a further Record of September 18th 1780 Major Bazett objected to the heavy expense of making so wide a road from Banks's to Buttermilk Point but Captain Pierie urged the necessity of a 12 feet wide road for the purpose of traversing cannon to annoy passing shipping, the cost of the road to be £300.

Both the road and Batteries must have occupied some years of work but certainly the proof is still there today that the Project was successfully completed, and although the road in present day terms could hardly be called that, it was an incredible achievement considering

the enormous amount of cutting and walling up on the sheer cliff faces around the coast. The Batteries as well would have involved some dreadfully dangerous hazards during the course of construction.



Plate 19: Buttermilk Point Upper Battery

According to a Record of March 31st 1787, ships were to be stopped at Buttermilk Point and a board was to be provided with the sign:-"SEND YOUR BOAT". In his book "History of the Island of St. Helena" published in 1823, T. H. Brooke stated that the board was still visible in his time some 40 years later. The wording of the previous Record seemed to indicate that the Batteries were about to be brought into active use. Prior to this the Half Moon Battery was the point for challenging passing ships, but with the new Batteries stationed much further to windward, there would be a better chance of detecting and firing on defaulters.

The Buttermilk Point Batteries consist of an Upper Battery, and a two-tier Lower Battery, both of which involved an enormous amount of road cutting for access.

Taking the Upper Battery first, this is sited high up on the cliffs overlooked by Sugar Loaf Hill. The semicircular breastwork wall 3 feet thick is about 25 feet internal diameter with the platform area 4 feet below its sloping crest. A concentric stone traversing track is positioned close to the wall. On its northern side the Battery is abutted by a flanking wall that extends back to the cliff face. One gun embrasure is included in this flanking wall which is served by a gun platform of 40 feet length and 9 feet width, all formed of blue stone slabs. The remainder of the platform is earth filled.

Adjacent to one side of the rounded wall is a small stone building that was the guard house which has a 10 feet high plinth but the upper walls are in ruins. No information is available as to the type of gun that was used here but it was most likely an 18 pounder Garriss gun. A magazine built into the cliff face nearby is in ruins. Apart from its ruined portions this

Battery has a good appearance, and is a fine example of its type, with some excellent stonework.

At least 80 feet directly below, the Lower Battery is quite unique in being the only two-tier Battery on the island. From the Upper Battery it is linked via a wide footpath that has a sharp switch-back turn at Repulse Point Battery, and then down a long steep flight of stone steps from where the path proceeds around the cliffs to the top tier of the Lower Battery which is constructed very similarly to the Upper Battery. A navigation beacon has now been installed on the platform.

The bottom tier is projecting on the north side, and is accessible from above via a short flight of steps entered through a small porch building underneath which the cliff has been tunnelled, and then a final vertical shaft of 10 feet necessitates considerable care in descending to the platform which is only about 15 by 12 feet wedge-shaped, with walls 5 feet thick and two gun embrasures, one of these being quite small and was almost certainly used for the small 3 pounder iron gun shown on the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36, the other gun listed being an 18 pounder Garris Gun that was no doubt used on the top tier. A small well built magazine is built into one side of the bottom tier platform which is stone rubble fill.

It seems fairly certain that the purpose of the projecting bottom tier of the Battery was for enabling a gun to bear on any ship that came close inshore under the Battery, as on the top tier platform it would not have been possible to depress the gun sufficiently to bear on a ship in that position.

The Buttermilk Point Batteries are splendid examples of the island's early fortifications, and for those who visit there, they will very likely be seen as the most interesting section of Banks Lines.

Sugar Loaf Hill

Although there is no mention in the Records of Sugar Loaf Hill ever being fortified it served for a long period as a surveillance post and later for the military signalling system. At about 1,000 feet above sea level it has a perfect position for observation in covering all approaches from the sea, and most of Jamestown Anchorage is visible, while ships bearing in from the east via Flagstaff Bay could easily be seen. Nearby Sugar Loaf Point was the historic navigational position where ships changed course for Jamestown after rounding the north-east tip of the island.

As mentioned in the Records of 1717 Sugar Loaf was one of the places where outguards were kept, and there is much evidence of ruins for the old walled up track that rises to the summit, but the ascent today is quite a dangerous exercise.

After the new batteries had been built further north at Banks Lines, Governor Brooke directed on 23rd March 1793 that no ship under British colours was to make any attempt at passing any of the batteries until written permission was received or a white flag with a red

cross*³ was posted at Sugar Loaf. If they ignored this and attempted to pass the batteries without the signal being made, they would inevitably be fired on.

A military telegraph system was introduced to the island by Governor Patton in 1803, and as confirmed on Barnes Map of 1811 Sugar Loaf Hill was one of the telegraph stations. Both Half Moon and Butter-milk Point Batteries can be seen from there, thus enabling signals to be relayed from the Batteries to Jamestown or vice versa, via Ladder Hill Signal Station which in a direct line is only about 2 miles distant. There is a massive high rock perched in the middle of the summit platform on Sugar Loaf, and the signalling arrangement could have been mounted on this. Due to the windswept nature of this peak the personnel whose task it was to operate the telegraph would have needed some kind of building shelter, and this might have been part of the ruins to be seen below the summit.

Although Sugar Loaf Hill is quite difficult to ascend; the effort of getting there is very rewarding both historically and for the magnificent splendour of the views that are available.

Flagstaff Bay

Here we have the largest Bay of any around the island, and all sailing ships approaching the island had to proceed across Flagstaff Bay because it was necessary to keep within range of the coast to ensure that they altered course early enough at Sugar Loaf Point for maintaining way from the south-easterly prevailing wind as they ran along the coast towards Jamestown Anchorage.

From the above it can be seen that Flagstaff Bay was regarded as a vital area of the island's defence strategy, and this is borne out from the Records of 7th January 1793 in which Governor Brooke stated that a road was to be made from Banks's to "look into Flagstaff Bay". Although it was no more than a formed track, this "road" still exists and starts from Half Moon Battery to run up the north slope of Banks Valley where part of it was reinforced by stone walling now ruined. It winds around the hill and crosses a dry gut on its way up towards the base of Sugar Loaf Hill near which it branches off to reach the cliffs overlooking Flagstaff Bay, but practically all the latter stage of this track is now only a very rough and narrow footway. Limestone was also found just behind the cliffs above Flagstaff Bay and no doubt the "road" would have been useful for transporting it down to the kiln near Banks Platform.

In the same Record of 1793 Governor Brooke directed that a light boat commanded by a French speaking sergeant should be stationed at Flagstaff Bay where all foreign vessels should lie to, and send in their boat with satisfactory proof that they were to be trusted. If any vessel refused to comply, Banks's was to fire on them beginning with Point Pierie (Buttermilk Point) and to be followed by all other batteries opening fire when it could be done with effect. Governor Brooke stated that "from time immemorial it had been the law

³ *Footnote:- This was the E.I.C. flag (the Cross of St. George) which until 1606 had also been the flag of England.

of the island that any ship attempting to come around the first battery to windward without previously sending in their boat, should be fired on".

Later in 1793 the Records stated that guns were to be mounted to windward above Flagstaff Bay to prevent enemy ships from being able to lie there with impunity. No positive evidence of a gun site can now be found but the likeliest place for this would be the level top of a large hill overlooking Flagstaff Bay and opposite Sugar Loaf. At the west end of this hill there is a ruined stone building that has the style of being an early magazine. Guns could easily have been hauled up there and well placed to bear directly on Flagstaff Bay.

There is no landing place anywhere along the great coastal expanse of Flagstaff Bay, but there are one or two places on the high cliffs where local fishermen occasionally go down on a rope to the rocks far below. A slender track is following the cliff line from Sugar Loaf Point up to Flagstaff Hill about two miles distant.

Chapter 6

PROSPEROUS BAY SECTOR

Includes Holdfast Tom Battery, Prosperous Bay Battery with Martello Tower, and Prosperous Bay Signal Station.

Holdfast Tom Battery

Before it served for a military installation, this prominent high cliff was directly associated with the landing by an English force at Prosperous Bay on 4th May 1673. Commanded by Captain Richard Munden, the English squadron had arrived to retake the island from the Dutch who seized it 6 months earlier and were in possession of James Fort.

As Prosperous Bay is on the opposite side of the island to James Fort, the plan was to send a force overland and surprise the Dutch by attacking from the rear. The English were assisted in their strategy by a slave named Oliver who had formerly lived on the island and had a knowledge of landing places and overland routes. The force of 200 men that were landed under the command of Lieutenant Richard Keigwin had firstly to find a way up the nearby great wall of a sheer high cliff 778 feet above sea level, which was first scaled by one of the English soldiers named Tom who on reaching the crest was told by his comrades to "holdfast Tom", and today that particular cliff is still known by the name of Holdfast Tom. The force then marched via what is now Longwood to Hutts Gate, and then via the later named Munden's Hill along the eastern side of James Valley.

During the interim Captain Munden had sailed around to stand off and bombard James Fort which was surrendered by the Dutch before the overland force arrived. Lieutenant Keigwin was made Governor of the island for a short period, while Oliver was given the property of Walbro House for his services, but unfortunately he later took part in the mutiny of 1684 and was executed.

The crest of Holdfast Tom has now been modified to a substantial ledged area and the edging has been reinforced with stonework. There is evidence of other walling that once existed but is now just a large pile of stones. It is not very well known that Holdfast Tom served as a Battery site, and this is confirmed on Barnes Map of 1811. In the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36, Holdfast Tom Battery was recorded as having one 12 pounder Carronade but there is no gun there now. Certainly the Battery had a very good high elevation overlooking Prosperous Bay and lower Fisher's Valley, thus positioned it would have been extremely useful as a redoubt Battery.

On their fishing excursions to Prosperous Bay the islanders use Holdfast Tom as a rapid method of descending and ascending the cliff a rope fastened around a projecting rock enabling them to achieve such a remarkable feat, and the author was privileged to see this expertly performed by Henry Moyce of Longwood. For those who do not feel inclined to

take "the plunge" there is a rather hazardous track winding around the cliff faces to below. Rising from Holdfast Tom a rough track runs through the cleft of further steep cliffs to easier terrain nearly a quarter of a mile up, where the existence of an old guard house is evident by a pile of stones and further ruins can be seen distributed over a wide area.

Considering the extraordinary obstacle the English had to overcome at Holdfast Tom in order to reach their objective, it would seem appropriate to install some kind of plaque at the site to signify this remarkable episode of the island's early history.

Prosperous Bay Battery with Martello Tower

The well built semicircular shaped Prosperous Bay Battery and its separate Martello Tower are situated on the mound of a high cliff at the western end of the rough shoreline entrance to Fisher's Valley. There was formerly another Martello Tower at the eastern end but it has long been destroyed by heavy seas or floods.

Due no doubt to the fact that Prosperous Bay had been used by the English themselves as a landing place, the obvious thinking of the East India Company led them to believe that it could also be used by an enemy. From Island Records of 27th June 1678 it was indicated that outguards had been kept and would continue to be kept at Prosperous Bay on a day and night rotation basis, while the same record states that two small guns were kept there. In 1717 it was recommended that 4 men and 1 officer be on constant duty at Prosperous Bay and one man at Keigwin's Landing Place which is in the same area.

A List of Guns at the various batteries in 1727 gave Prosperous Bay as having four, which shows the important consideration for having it fortified, and yet a Report on the Defences of the Island, dated 1st May 1734, stated with reference to Prosperous Bay "there hath never been any guns here", seeming to be an error because the foregoing records state that there were guns. Also it was mentioned that the ascent of hills was extremely difficult, this being no under-statement as the author can vouch for today!



Plate 20: Ruins of Martello Tower near Prosperous Bay Battery, and the wall of cliffs that include Holdfast Tom at the rear.



Plate 21: Prosperous Bay Battery viewed against the landing place of Prosperous Bay. The old Garrison Gun lying on the platform is dated 1810.

On a further point of controversy for Prosperous Bay, the Report on Fortifications of the Island by Major Rennell in 1777 stated that it was not fortified, but mentioned that it was an excellent landing place. However there is a possibility that the guns were removed for a long time during the interim and before the present Battery was built.

Whatever the truth is, Prosperous Bay Battery is of a type that belongs to an early period, very likely built during the early 19th century to form part of fortifications during the period

of Napoleon's captivity on the island. The Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 show Prosperous Bay Battery as having one 8 inch Howitzer and one 9 pounder Garris Gun with two wooden platforms. It is on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 but doubtful if it was operational then, while the 1922 Admiralty Map endorses it as a ruins.

There are two factors that have been favourable for ensuring that this Battery is in such a well preserved condition. Firstly being in such a remote part of the island it has avoided being interfered with, and secondly because of the extremely barren nature of surrounding terrain, there is no vegetation such as prickly pears to overgrow it.

The neat half round wall 3 feet thick and built of roughly squared and coursed blue and red stone, has a sloping crest rendered with lime cement. Externally the earth is ramped up to the wall that rises 3 feet high from the cliff base.

Lying on the platform is an old Garris Gun approximately 6 feet long and calibre of 4 inches. Due to sea air exposure the surface metal is very corroded but the date of 1810 can be seen. There is no sign of any gun carriage. From its elevated position of some 200 feet above sea level this gun would have commanded a good bearing on any ship in the Bay.

About 30 yards uphill from the Battery is the old loopholed Martello Tower*, very likely built at the same time as the Battery, and exhibiting the same good standard of stonework even though it has become a ruin. No records are available for the Tower except that along with the Battery it is shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850. It is by no means a total ruins, in fact a very large extent of the walls are still standing and sound. The dimensions of the Tower are 20 by 15 feet and the height was originally nearly 20 feet, three of the walls being not far short of that at present. A set of four well formed splayed openings with surrounds of red stone, are at a height of 10 feet on two sides, while the front and back have much narrower openings as loopholes. The walls neatly rounded at corners have been built of squared and coursed blue stone with lime mortar used. Although there is no sign of it now, there obviously was a floor to the upper portion.

Most of one wall has fallen down an adjacent steep gully, which is the only access up to the Tower and Battery; together with another rockfall from a steep outcrop, the ascent is now very hazardous. The Tower has no access anywhere at the base, it being certain that the personnel would have had to use a ladder either up to one of the larger openings or else right over the top. Wherever this type of Tower was built on the island, there is always an adjacent Battery, and in addition to serving as a fortified observation post, the personnel would be in a good position to repel an enemy who had infiltrated the Battery area.

The shoreline at Prosperous Bay is a short stretch of very large shingles deposited in big mounds along the shore. About 50 yards up on the foreshore can be seen the walls of a very stoutly constructed small building about 10 feet square, and with walls 3 feet thick it would seem to have been a magazine. From the good quality red and blue stonework it can be judged as being built at the same time as the Battery and Tower above.

* Footnote: Further information concerning Martello Towers is given in the Chapter on Thompson's Valley Sector.

Extremely hazardous for access, the Prosperous Bay Battery and Tower are not very well known, but they are interesting military relics and the area forms a vital link in St. Helena's early history, while the splendid coastal scenery alone is unforgettable.

Prosperous Bay Signal Station

Despite the name suggesting it, the Prosperous Bay Signal Station is quite a substantial distance from Prosperous Bay, as Saddle Point together with King and Queen Rocks behind which it is situated, are nearly one mile south-east along the coast from Prosperous Bay Point. However the Signal Station does have a good view of the coastline in both directions including the outer approaches to Prosperous Bay, while the Prosperous Bay Battery and Tower are also visible about a mile below in a direct line.

We get a very good clue to the origins of the Signal Station from the Report by Major Rennell of 26th November 1777 when it was stated that there was an Alarm or Lookout House situated at the back of Saddle Point. He went on to elaborate that the signals were communicated to James Fort by another Alarm House situated near the centre of the island and in front of James Valley.

From the above it is certain that Major Rennell's first mentioned Alarm House was the present Prosperous Bay Signal Station probably built about 1770, while the other Alarm House is still known by that same name. Prosperous Bay Signal Station is at a height of 1253 feet, while Alarm House is 1910 feet above sea level. The signals at that time were of the audible type using gunfire, and most likely the signal guns at Prosperous Bay Station were situated at a battery less than 200 yards away, which is shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850. The Prosperous Bay Signal Station served mainly as an alarm for ships approaching the island on the south - east trade winds. Signals from there would have been relayed via the Alarm House signal guns to James Fort.

In 1803 a much improved signalling method was introduced by Governor Patton, this being a telegraph system which initially consisted of wooden frames on posts with balls.

In addition to Prosperous Bay, telegraph stations were installed on a series of strategic heights around the island, such as Sugar Loaf Hill, Ladder Hill, Goat Pound Ridge, Cason's Gate, West Point, and one at the rear of Horse's Head at Sandy Bay, all of which are shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850. The telegraph system made a great contribution to the defence system by enabling signals to be transmitted around the island, and as they were all interconnected, no vessel could approach from any direction without being observed. In 1816 a more rapid telegraph system using flags was introduced, and continued until the electric telegraph was introduced in 1866. Use of the Signal Station was probably phased out about this time but no doubt it continued to be occupied residentially for a period. In 1904 it was the scene of one of the very few serious crimes on St. Helena this century when a man was murdered, the two men found responsible being hanged in 1905.

Today the Prosperous Bay Signal House is reduced to a ruin with only its stone walls standing, but it gives evidence of having been substantially built and consisted of 4 main rooms. A flagstaff which was installed nearby has long since disappeared.

Perched on its high rocky ledge and visible from far off, this old relic does attract some attention from visitors because any ordinary motor vehicle can get within a quarter of a mile from it, thus affording many the opportunity of viewing the scenic coastal grandeur on this side of the island.

Chapter 7

RUPERT'S VALLEY SECTOR

Includes Rupert's Line, Bunker's Hill Battery, Saddle Battery, and Sampson's Battery.

Rupert's Line

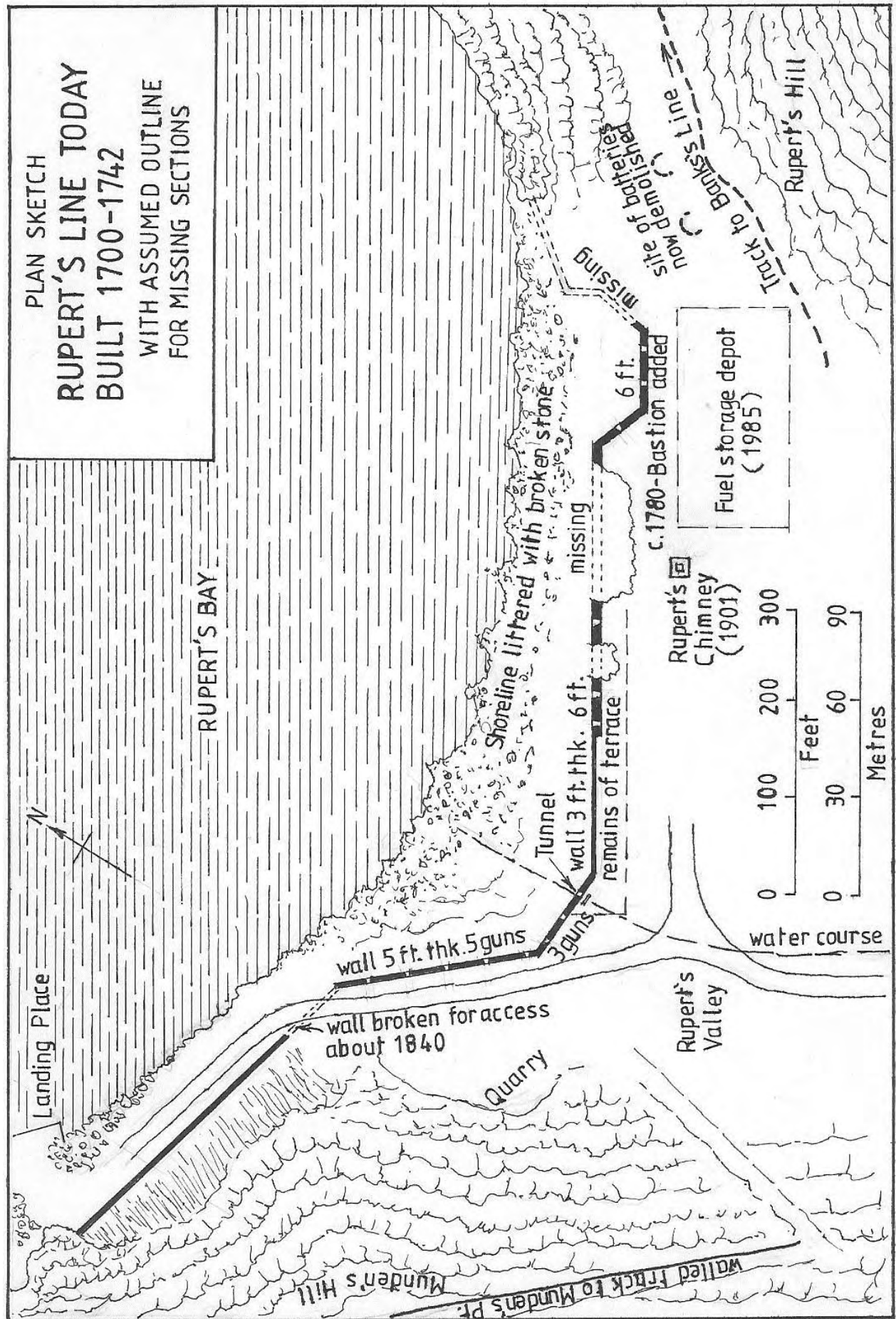
This extensive fortified wall built across Rupert's Bay entrance to Rupert's Valley is amongst the earliest of island defences. The Records confirm that the Valley was named after Prince Rupert (1619-1682) who was the son of the King of Bohemia and a nephew of King Charles I. He had command of the English fleet after restoration of the Monarchy in 1660. As given in the Records of May 1734 he anchored at the Bay to refresh his ship's company, and thus came the name Rupert's Valley.

From the Records of 27th June 1678 it was stated that outguards kept there were to be continued and it had 8 guns. The earliest reference to show a fort there was the Seller Map of 1682, but this could not have been the massive curtain wall of which a portion can be seen today. In 1684 a directive by the East India Company that all Valleys were to be walled up, no doubt gave some impetus for building the large works there.

A good clue to the first construction period of Rupert's Line is in the Records of June 1706 during Governor Poirier's term of office when it was stated that great endeavours were being made to carry forward the new defensive works at Rupert's Valley which had been commenced some time before, but received much damage from floods. The urgency for the completion of Rupert's defences came from an incident of the same year when the battery at Banks Platform failed to stop two French ships that contrived the capture of two English ships anchored in the Roads to Jamestown.

It does appear that the new fortifications at Rupert's were not of very good account because in 1717 it was described as so decayed and out of repair that a ship could go in there and lie out of reach from every gun. A list of guns in the various batteries for 1717 gave Ruperts as having nine.

Governor Thomas Lambert said in 1742 that Ruperts was defective in every respect, and he asserted that it seemed to be erected just for putting the Company to expense. But over the following long period nothing was done because in his Military Report of 26th November 1777 Major Rennell described the fortifications at Rupert's Bay as being the most neglected of any in construction, the main weakness being that it was unflanked. He described the beach as well enfiladed by 7 guns on the left of the line and there were 16 other guns mostly ill-placed. His suggestion for many improvements included a bastion on the right of the Line which was eventually added, as it is shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850, but today all the section of Line that included it has disappeared.



On 31st March 1787 Ruperts Lines were recorded as being a wreck after the flood which flowed over the full extent of platform, and it was said that the repairs would be equal to building a new fortification. In spite of this it is evident that some endeavour was made to restore it.

On the Barnes Map of 1811, the fortification is referred to as Rupert's Line and additional batteries are shown well back from the line but the position given is at the rear of where the new fuel storage tanks are now situated, and there is no sign of any old batteries there now. On the Read Map of 1815 and 1818 the Line is called Rupert's Fort.

Major-General Beatson who was Governor from 1808-13 later wrote in his book "Tracts relative to the Island of St. Helena" published in 1816, that Rupert's Bay together with Jamestown and Lemon Valley were all fortified by superior batteries, provided with furnaces for heating shot, and flanked by cannon placed upon the cliff far above the reach of ships' guns. Mortars and Howitzers for showering grape-shot on ships' decks or on boats attempting to land, were also provided.

From the above one might perhaps be curious as to where were the flanking cannon for Rupert's Line, and on investigation it was found that in addition to the 21 guns of varying types listed for Rupert's Line from the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36, the same List also gave 5 guns listed for Rupert's Line Hill at a height of 426 feet. This reference to Rupert's Hill is firmly believed by the author to be in error for Munden's Hill which had fortifications existing on its eastern ledge at that elevation, and the old batteries there certainly face Rupert's Line in the correct position for flanking it. Also there is no other elevation elsewhere at the height of 426 feet which would have been suitable. On several earlier maps Ruperts Hill is shown in error for what should have been given as Munden's Hill.

The old Batteries on Munden's Hill eastern ledge are not to be confused with two more modern batteries, one only 50 yards away and the other further west. The guns listed for Rupert's Line Hill (sic) were four 12 pounders and one 9 pounder Garris Guns.

The other mystery in the Melliss List of Guns is an additional three 18 pounder Garris Guns for Rupert's Bay (Mitchell's Lines) which are very likely to be the guns for detached batteries behind Rupert's Line and already referred to above. The name Mitchell's Lines was almost certain to have been given in deference to Captain Mitchell who was very actively involved in military works during the latter stages of the 18th century.

In taking a survey of what is left of Rupert's Line today, firstly it can be seen that nearly half of the great stretch of curtain wall has been taken away by the sea, and judging by erosion to the remnants, further demolition may soon take place. Fortunately the existing section can enable one to get an impression of the full extent.

From one end to the other the curtain wall closing up the Valley was nearly 200 yards long at a maximum height of 20 feet and in full measure it was indeed a monumental work. The remaining western half has 6 feet thick walling at the centre of the Line and still contains 4 gun embrasures in that section, but the central bastion has disappeared. The line running in

a westerly direction is then sharply angled to a 5 feet thick flanking wall containing 8 embrasures before the wall stops short where a section was removed to make way for an access road to the later landing place, but on the opposite side of the break it can be seen that the wall extends to abut the cliff. On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 the break in the curtain wall at this end had already been made*.

The arched stormwater tunnel at the western end had a portcullis, the slot for which is still visible in the platform above, together with 5 loopholes in adjacent stonework for musketry to help defend the tunnel entrance. The massive walls consist of random size stone without any method of coursing, and although the stonework is laid with lime mortar there is obviously no method of bonding the walls against stress, thus rendering these a ready target for heavy seas or floods.



Plate 22: Rupert's Bay and the ruins of Rupert's Line across the entrance to Rupert's Valley

* This was probably made in 1840 when the locality was used as a Reception Depot for Liberated African slaves.



Plate 23: Rupert's Line curtain wall with storm water tunnel that had a portcullis.

At the ruined eastern end there is only a short piece of the Line remaining, this containing 3 embrasures, while about 30 yards away some more ruins are visible. There are no guns anywhere at Ruperts today but the author was told that 4 of the original guns are presently positioned in embrasures alongside the Jamestown Cold Stores which originally formed part of James Fort. Of the 21 guns listed for Rupert's Line in 1825-36 these included two 13 inch mortars and 19 Garris Guns of varying sizes.

It must be much more than 100 years since Rupert's Line was active and apart from guards being stationed there during the World War periods it has served no other purpose.

In 1901 when 6000 Boer prisoners of war were held on the island, an ambitious sea-water desalination plant was constructed to supply water for the prisoners. The high brick chimney with kilns can still be seen alongside Rupert's Line, and a pipeline was built to the prisoner-of-war camp at Deadwood Plain, more than two miles away over some tortuous steep hills, but according to the 'St Helena Guardian' of 24th August 1901, the plant was only used as a trial. Present activities near Rupert's Line include a fuel storage depot, and a sand dredging operation which involves pumping sand ashore for use in the building industry. The shoreline in front of the Line is covered with rough mounds of stone shingle that offer no temptation for swimming.

After serving as a vital component in the East India Company's defensive system of fortified lines, Rupert's Line was phased out as obsolete, and abandoned to its fate. Without virtually any chance of restoration, it seems that this old military relic will simply be allowed to fade away.

Bunker's Hill Battery

This Battery is shown on both Cocks Map of 1804 and Barnes Map of 1811, but it could well date back to an earlier period as it was probably named to signify the Battle of Bunker Hill fought in 1775 between the American colonists and a British Army force during the American War of Independence.

Placed on Bunker's Hill about a mile up Rupert's Valley, the Battery was erected near the summit at a height of 660 feet above sea level, and its disposition was apparently based on the possibility that should Rupert's Line fortification be overrun by an enemy, Bunker's Hill Battery would be well placed to bear on an attack up the Valley. On an inspection of the site, this old circular shaped Battery can be seen on the eastern ledge of the summit from where its gun would have had a direct bearing on Rupert's Valley, while on the western ledge a long walled up platform may have also been used to mount guns which would have been bearing on another deep valley below that side and across to the slopes of Munden's Hill.

The Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 only give one 24 pounder Carronade for this Battery, but that does not mean other guns were not there during an earlier period. The Palmer Military Map of 1850 indicates both the Battery and platform together with a small building, the ruins of which still exist, and the fortification had a reference number. The 1922 Admiralty Map shows the Battery as a ruins.



Plate 24: Bunker's Hill Battery, overlooking Rupert's Valley. Early 19th century.

The circular Battery has indeed a very ruined appearance today, but the shape is still evident in the old breastwork wall rising about 10 feet up from cliff rock. All the upper wall has fallen off covering the platform with loose stones and nearby-is an old stone building with very little of its walls standing.

The platform on the western ledge is about 150 feet long by 10 feet wide with a retaining wall which is in a better condition than the Battery. There does not seem to be any other

purpose for this rubble filled platform other than for gun emplacements in spite of the wall not being carried up to a parapet as was usual.

Due to very steep slopes with no track there are very few people prepared to run the gauntlet of prickly pears and hazardous loose stones for visiting Bunker's Hill Battery because it offers very little feature as a reward, but there will remain some small element of mystery concerning the purpose of its long platform.

Saddle Battery

This twin Battery was very likely built during the Napoleonic Wars as although it was not shown on Cocks Map of 1804 it is shown on Barnes Map of 1811. If its good condition is used as a guideline, that alone indicates a much later period than Bunker's Hill Battery. Situated towards the southern end of Munden's Hill, just below the ridge on the eastern slope overlooking Rupert's Valley and at a height of 870 feet above sea level, Saddle Battery was obviously built for the same reason as Bunker's Hill Battery, to defend Rupert's Valley if Rupert's Line had been taken by an enemy, and it was very well placed for that purpose. It was likely called Saddle Battery because it is close to the saddle of Munden's Hill ridge.

The Palmer Military Map of 1850 shows Saddle Battery together with a reference number but in spite of its comparatively good order it would surely have ceased to be an active Battery long before the end of the 19th century.

Consisting of twin semicircular breastwork walls 3 feet thick, these are linked together by a cross wall. Both rounded walls have sloping crests, one being nearly level with the platform, the other forming a low parapet one foot high. From the base rock these walls rise in very neat stonework up to a maximum height of 8 feet.

A feature of Saddle Battery is the two guns these being 12 pounder Garris type having a calibre of 5 inches, and 4 wheeled cast iron carriages which have raised lettering to show that they were manufactured by John Sturges & Company, Bowling, Yorkshire. No date is visible on the guns but it has been given that they were dated 1794. One of the carriages has two wheels missing, but apart from rust the two guns are in a sound condition. Saddle Battery is very easily accessible by a foot track which is about half a mile from where it joins the road to Rupert's Bay (Field Road). The Battery is interesting as an indicator of the overall strategy for defending Rupert's Valley, as Bunker's Hill Battery is also visible in the distance from here. About 50 yards along the path from the Battery there are the remains of a small magazine.



*Plate 25: Saddle Battery with two old Garris Guns on twin platforms.
Overlooking Rupert's Bay*

Sampson's Battery

Positioned at the extreme southern end of Munden's Hill ridge, 870 feet above sea level and less than 200 yards from Saddle Battery, this large semicircular Battery is built facing the upper end of James Valley but its 3 stone formed gun platforms allow for a bearing on both Rupert's Valley and lower James Valley including Jamestown.

In addition to defending Rupert's Valley with the support of Saddle and Bunker's Hill Batteries it could also serve to defend the approaches up James Valley if an enemy had succeeded in breaking through James Fort at Jamestown. Its date of origin can be coupled with Saddle Battery between 1804 and 1811.

The two guns at this Battery are the same type of 12 pounders as for Saddle Battery, complete with John Sturges carriages, but once again one carriage has two wheels missing. These guns are not in as good a condition as those at Saddle Battery and an attempt has been made to cut off an end of one barrel by some souvenir-hunter who found the task just too formidable. The present guns might have only been brought there after 1883 because in that year Benjamin Grant wrote in his book "A Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" that Sampson's Battery had two 16 pounder guns whereas the present guns are 12 pounders.

It is believed that Sampson's Battery is named after a Lieutenant Sampson of the St. Helena Regiment who helped to quell the 1811 Mutiny and this might be Colonel Charles Sampson whose death notice of 5th March 1860 records that he served in the St. Helena Regiment.

Sampson's Battery has a spacious platform area of 60 feet diameter semicircular form to include three stone platforms, all being surrounded by a 4 feet thick breast wall that has a sloping crest one foot above platform level. A more recent introduction to Sampson's

Battery is a large navigation sign with a white triangle on a black background, used as a bearing by ships for fixing their anchorage position at Jamestown Harbour.



Plate 26: Sampson's Battery showing one of two Garriss Guns on the platforms.

The Battery is easily accessible via the same foot track that leads to Saddle Battery, and starting from the road to Rupert's Valley it is no more than half a mile. On 17th April 1885 this access way to Sampson's Battery was linked to an unusual robbery which involved breaking into and stealing a safe from the Government Savings Bank office then situated at the Court House, Jamestown. The safe containing £166, quite a large sum in those times, was later found on the hillside of the road leading to Sampson's Battery. For some time no clue could be found to discover the thief, but on his own suspicions the Governor had the lock of the door examined, to reveal a very small piece from the point of a knife blade. A man who had just left the island for the Cape was suspected, and Police Sergeant Harrison took passage there to investigate. The knife from which the small piece had broken, was found on the thief, and an arrest was made under the Fugitive Offender's Act. On being returned to St. Helena, William Scullard was tried and convicted being sentenced to 7 years penal servitude. It is something of a paradox that James Homagee the Crown Prosecutor in the trial was convicted of embezzlement from the same Savings Bank in 1919.

Similarly as for Saddle Battery it is unlikely Sampson's Battery was used for military purposes much later than the mid 19th century, and apart from being a historic military site, it is an excellent vantage point for a great expanse of scenery.

Chapter 8

WALLED UP VALLEYS

Includes Breakneck Valley, Friar's Valley, Old Woman's Valley, and Thompson's Valley.

Scope: In 1684 the East India Company issued an instruction that all valleys and gullies on the leeward side of the island were to be barricaded at their sea ends with strong stone walls for delaying any attempt by an enemy to steal up after landing, and thus giving the inhabitants time to be armed. Not all the valley entrances were walled up because many had sufficient natural obstacles such as precipices or steep cliffs which were sufficient to deter the enemy; the following are some Valleys where these walls are either still existing or else there is evidence that one did exist.

Breakneck Valley

Just as the name suggests, one needs to take exceptional care in getting down to Breakneck Valley which has dangerously steep sloping sides covered with rocky outcrops. There is only one very indistinct track starting from Ladder Hill Fort via the Rifle Range and along a ledge towards the coast where this shadow of a track plunges down the steep rocky slopes on a slightly zigzag course to the Valley floor where it is then possible to pick a way to the Valley wall.

The constricted access to Breakneck Valley from the sea required a wall of only about 30 yards in length to block it off. This wall of some 20 feet at its highest point, is built to incorporate a natural precipice, and a stone spillway of neatly laid slabs has been extended back for 15 feet from the crest, although it is quite a rarity for any water to run down the Valley.

Any attempt to land a boat at the entrance to Breakneck Valley would be fraught with danger due to the terribly rough shoreline together with submerged rocks. If an enemy had got ashore and managed to scale the wall, a further tortuous exercise lay ahead in trying to force a way up the deep valley, particularly a high precipice about 200 yards up from the wall. The author attempted to traverse the full length of this Valley with an idea of coming out at its upper reaches, but was foiled by impossibly steep slopes and had to return to the bottom for ascending by the same steep track used for the descent.

Subsequent to the original wall built soon after 1684, Governor Lambert reported on 27th April 1742 that the breastwork of the wall could be raised, but very little else was required to make it very difficult for an enemy to land there. A Record of 1753 shows that the breastwork of the wall was washed away, and it appears certain that the present wall dates

from near that time. In his Military Report of 1777 Major Rennell stated that Breakneck Valley had a wall built across it close to the sea, but there were no other defences.

Considering it is built of stone rubble, this old wall is in a surprisingly sound condition, the only portion to have come loose is at one end where a small section against the cliff has been routed out to ramped up stones below for access to the shore and fishing rocks.

Friar's Valley

Taking its name from Friar's Ridge which has a stone column resembling a Friar, this large scenic Valley was also walled up at the sea end similarly to Breakneck Valley, but most of the wall was washed away by a flood in 1878 and all that can be seen today is some ruined stonework on each flank.

The nature of the coastline to Friar's Valley would have deterred any attempt by an enemy to land, and the floor of the Valley is very difficult to traverse for the first half mile. The Valley then opens out to give an easier slope on the Cleugh's Plain side from where there is good access to all the up country areas. Therefore it does seem as if there was some urgency to wall it off to foil a determined landing attempt.

Major Rennell mentioned Friar's Valley as having a defensive wall in his Report of November 1777, but apart from this there is very little other reference to it. In 1997 after a road was cut, it became possible to walk the full length of Friar's Valley to the sea.

Old Woman's Valley

This picturesque Valley is flanked towards its sea end by a prominent ridged hill called The Spyglass of 1000-feet above sea level on the northern side, and the lower cliffs of High Hill bearing on the southern slopes. It has fairly good landing ledges on its shoreline and there is some evidence in the Records of 27th June 1678 which state that the Dutch landed there when they invaded the island in 1672, but other historians notably T. H. Brooke in his "History of the Island of St. Helena" published in 1823, state specifically that they landed at Bennet's Point and proceeded up Swanley Valley. The same Records of 1678 mention that outguards continued to be stationed at Old Woman's Valley, while two small guns were kept on the Ridge, this meaning the ridge of The Spyglass. The substantial defensive wall built across the Valley entrance is certainly indicating that it was thought to be quite vulnerable to attack.

In his Military Report of 1777 Major Rennell described Old Woman's Valley as not fortified and no mention of a wall, which is fair evidence that it did not exist then, but it is shown on Cocks Map of 1804, and probably built at a late stage of the 18th century. With the rough precipitous nature of the foreshore, those responsible for carrying out the 1684 directive to wall up Valleys no doubt felt that Old Woman's Valley at that time had sufficient natural obstacles at the entrance to deter an enemy.

The present formidable wall was built in two sections on both sides of a 12 feet wide precipice, and it is a very soundly built stretch of masonry at least 60 yards in length by 20 feet average height; even today it is impossible to scale this wall by normal means. With Egg Island looming out of the sea close by, the entrance and defensive wall to Old Woman's Valley are both scenic and historic features which can be easily reached by boat from Jamestown.



Plate 27: Walled-up entrance to Old Woman's Valley, c. 1780

Thompson's Valley

The wall to Thompson's Valley was mentioned by Major Rennell in his Military Report of 1777 when he described this Valley as being shut up by a wall, and it was later confirmed on Cocks Map of 1804. There is a stretch of shingles lining the narrow shoreline which is not so rough as most of the other Valley entrances, but the shallow approaches with submerged rocks still present a danger.

Thompson's Valley has a very deep floor running between great steeply sloping hills on both sides for nearly two miles up country, but in spite of some very rough sections it is possible to force a way up there, this being an exercise of real endurance in hot weather as being on the leeward side of the island and sheltered, there is very little breeze in the Valley.

The defensive wall of 6 feet thick and 30 yards long, is not straight but has a dog-legged kink at the centre which is dished to form a spillway. Of all the walls, this is the only one to have squared stone used in its construction, and as such also the only one to have stonework laid

in courses. It appears to be a good sound wall with an extreme height of 20 feet, and at one end where a few stones have been removed it is possible with care to descend.

Chapter 9

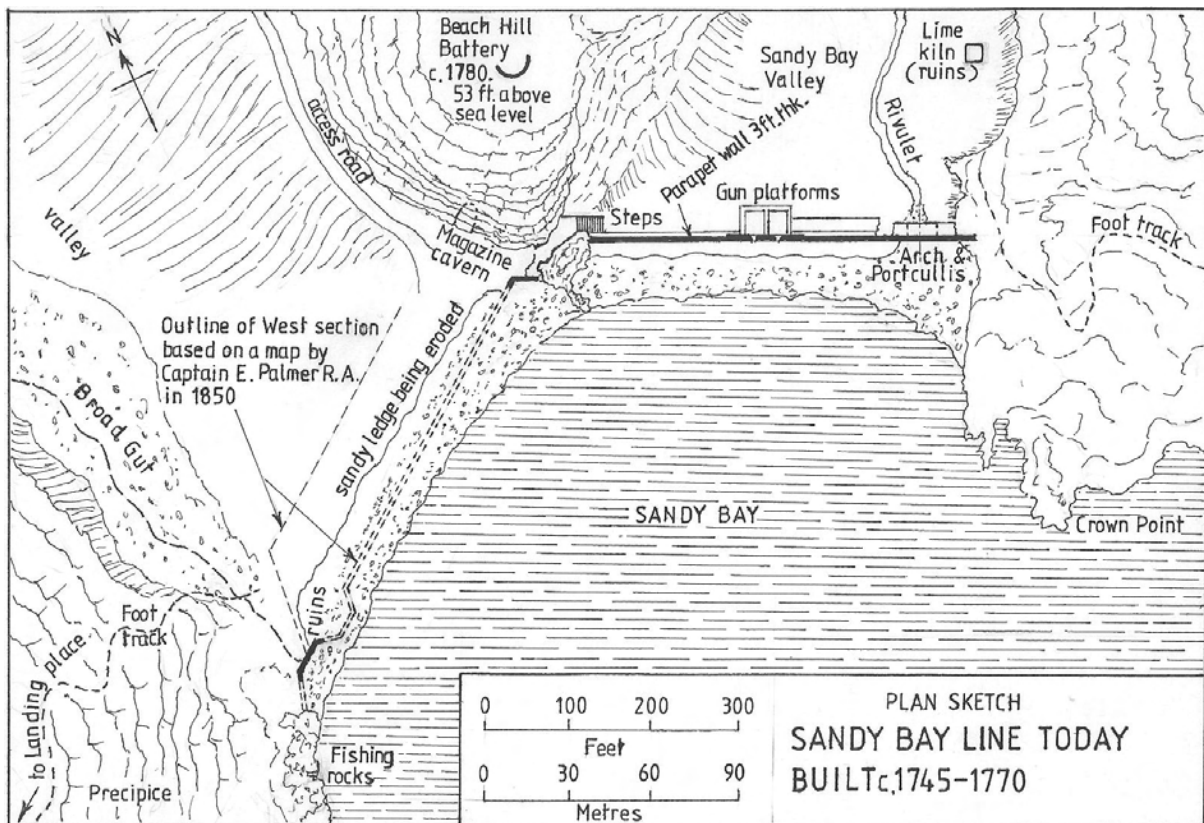
SANDY BAY SECTOR

Includes Sandy Bay Line, Beach Hill Battery, Horse's Head Battery, Seale's Battery, and Four Gun Battery.

Sandy Bay Line

Sandy Bay sounds as if it ought to be sandy, but there is precious little sand in the rough mound of shingles stretching along the shoreline of the only place on the island that is actually referred to as a beach. However there is indeed sand above the foreshore and also quite evident on other areas adjacent to the Bay.

Due to its almost complete exposure to south-easterly prevailing winds, Sandy Bay receives a rather constant battering from heavy seas, and therein lay the undoing of extensive fortifications that were built across it to form what became known as Sandy Bay Line although it was often called a Fort.



The first reference to Sandy Bay in the Records is 28th November 1695 when it was ordered that a Battery of two guns be built there. Nothing else seems to have been done there until after 1708 by which time some extensive limestone deposits found in the hills above the Bay

were soon put to use by burning the lime in kilns that can still be seen today near the fortifications, thus providing the essential constituent for mortar required by stonemasons.

The Battery still only had two guns in 1717 when it was recommended that an officer and two men be constantly stationed there. Any work that had been done in extending the defences must have received a serious setback during 1734 when a Record of 1st May stated that 4 guns and their carriages were washed away in stormy weather and mention was given that the Battery had been built too near the sea.

In 1742 Governor Lambert described Sandy Bay as a landing place of great extent and defended by a small Fort as he termed it. He criticised the fortification which then had six 4 pounder guns, and his proposal was to erect two batteries, one on the east and one on the west of the Line, each mounting three or four guns - 4 pounders. A further proposal by Governor Lambert was to join the right and left hand platforms with a drystone (no mortar) wall, thus forming one continuous Line. The decision to build the wall without mortar in order to expedite the work, certainly condemned the wall to a short existence, as all the west section of the Line was broken down by the sea a long time ago. This Report by Governor Lambert is very meaningful in the history of Sandy Bay Line because basically the Line as finally constructed was in that form, and it indicates that the period for building most of the Line was soon after 1742.



*Plate 28: Inland view of Sandy Bay Line eastern side, flanked by Crown Point.
The gun platforms are at centre.*

An extensive walled landing place was built on the south-west side of the Bay with access from there to the Line being via the most hazardous of foot tracks, up over the steep cliffs and down a near precipice to come out at the rear of the Line. Most of the landing place has been smashed to ruins by the sea, but some remains can be seen by those bold enough to get there.

Sandy Bay Line was several times recorded as suffering storm and sea damage during the latter half of the 18th century, but we have further confirmation of its form in November 1777 by Major Rennell when it was given as being a Line mounting ten small guns, and there was a small redoubt for musketry on the north-east point (which must have been Crown Point). Three guns on the east part of the Line were said to be well placed for defending the beach with flanking fire, these guns almost certainly being mounted in the position where the 4 remaining guns are lying on the platform today.

Major Rennell indicated that the western battery was badly arranged and suggested that a Battery on the Beach Hill would be a better fortification than the Line, this being an interesting recommendation because a Battery was indeed later constructed on Beach Hill.

The Line is clearly shown on the Read Map of 1815, and there is a good impression of it on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 which even shows the outline of both platforms, also including a bastion at the extreme western end. By 1883 Sandy Bay Line could not have been of much account as a fortification because Benjamin Grant in his book "A Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" of the same year mentioned that there was only one woman there to look after the Fort.

Today it can be seen that all the western side of the Line has disappeared leaving a crumbling sandy ledge that has no chance of opposing the fury of the sea. A ruined section of breastwork exists below the cliffs of Beach Hill, joining the eastern end of the Line which has its curtain wall intact, but the gun platforms are in ruins. These consisted of two platforms with granite slabs 6 inches thick and two embrasures for gun positions at the parapet wall. Four old cannons are in a terribly corroded condition, two of these being 12 pounder Garris Guns while the other two are Carronades. The main wall which has been restored is nearly 20 feet high, 4 feet thick at the platform section, and the remainder 3 feet thick with a parapet running the full length. The arched section over the rivulet is in fairly good condition although a hazard exists from loose masonry.



Plate 29: Sea face of Sandy Bay Line eastern side, showing two gun embrasures at centre of curtain wall.

About 100 yards up the Valley there is an old lime kiln with three furnaces exceptionally well constructed of red and blue stone. An older lime kiln probably the first built there is only 20 yards away, and further ruins of buildings nearby. A magazine cavern cut out of the cliffs below Beach Hill is another relic.

Apart from outguards stationed there during the World War periods, Sandy Bay Line has not been used as a fortification for well over 100 years, and today the locality of Sandy Bay Beach is a recreational area, but it can not be considered a suitable beach for either swimming or boating.

Beach Hill Battery

At a height of 53 feet above sea level, Beach Hill is situated directly above and behind Sandy Bay Line, and as mentioned in the previous section it was suggested by Major Rennel in 1777 and probably built in the late 18th century. It is shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850.

Although the stone breastwork of this Battery is in a ruinous condition, its semicircular form is still quite evident. A large very rusty old gun lying on the earth emplacement is rather unusual in having a ring cast on the cascable for hauling purposes and it is a different pattern of gun to the usual Garris type. The overall length is 10 feet and calibre about 5 inches.

Very well sited to command the whole Bay it is likely that this Battery was active for a longer period than the Line below as it was well clear to avoid any damage from the sea.

Horse's Head Battery

Projecting out to the entrance of Sandy Bay, Horse's Head must have presented one of the most formidable tasks imaginable for erecting batteries on. Bounded by unscaleable cliffs nearly all around, there is just a narrow neck at the inner end where providing one is desperate enough it is possible to scramble up and gain the summit.

Cocks Map of 1804 showed that a Battery was proposed on Horse's Head, the idea no doubt being prompted by the continuing wars in Europe at the time and giving rise towards strengthening the island defences against a possible invasion attempt.

As it is impossible to reach Horse's Head along the base of sea cliffs from Sandy Bay Line, the only access was inland and up over the top of great steep hills and making a deviation around the back, before coming down a steep valley to the neck of Horse's Head. At the same time as Horse's Head Battery was built there were two sea entrances which had to be barricaded; the most extensive of these was across the entrance to the Bay of a steep gully adjacent to the neck of Horse's Head, this involving a wall about 30 yards long with an arched opening to allow storm water into the Bay, but most of this wall has been washed away by the sea. The other wall of about 20 feet long by 15 feet high was built lengthwise across the neck to block off access from the sea, and this wall still exists, but with the top layer of stones being loose and the mortar so soft that one would be courting disaster to use this as an access way to the summit of Horse's Head.

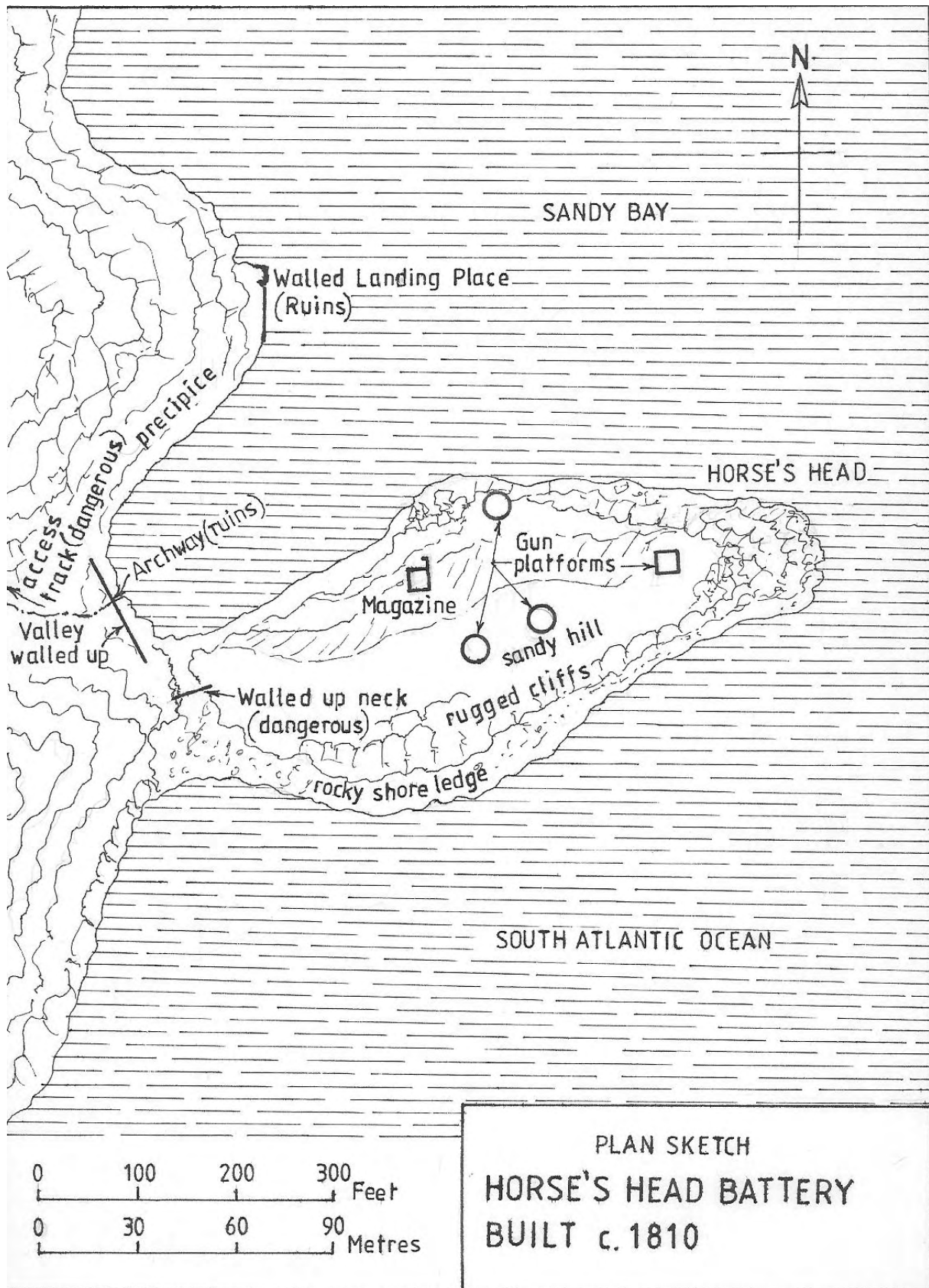




Plate 30: Horse's Head at the entrance to Sandy Bay, and the site of Horse's Head Battery.

Once having achieved the near impossible feat of scrambling up to Horse's Head, the name Sandy Bay becomes very meaningful as the slopes and summit ridge are covered with deep dark grey sand. The Battery consists of four separate gun platforms, one of these in square form being at the tip of the Head, two circular platforms 15 feet diameter with stone breastwork at a height of 3 feet are in the centre with a bearing directly over the Bay, and a lower circular platform is now in ruins. It is apparent that with the exception of the platform at the tip of the Head, all the others were sited for firing into the Bay and not out to sea.



*Plate 31: Ruins of Horse's Head Battery
Two gun platforms on the left, and magazine on the right.*

Between the circular platforms there is a heap of 3 old guns and their carriages all in a deplorably corroded condition. They are all the same Carronade type with short barrels of 4 feet and a calibre of 6 inches; the carriages are a very old fashioned pattern with counterbalancing support at the rear, and although very little marking can be read on these guns, one was revealed as being an 18 pounder dated 1805. The Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 did not show any for Horse's Head Battery, only a mention of three platforms. One of the classic features of Horse's Head Battery is the splendidly built magazine building of 15 feet long by 10 feet wide, a base plinth 3 feet thick, and upper walls 2 feet thick rising to form a semicircular arched roof. A 6 feet high curved shielding wall is built on at the entrance. Both the magazine and circular batteries are built of the same light coloured stone.



Plate 32: A heap of three nearly disintegrated old Carronade Guns, one dated 1805, at Horse's Head Battery

There appears to have been no other building of any kind on Horse's Head, tending to suggest that it was only manned periodically. An old ruined telegraph station building very difficult of access, is situated on the third hill west from the Head.

A wide rock ledge is at the base of seafacing cliffs where the rough surf is constantly pounding with tremendous force. To the western coastline great barren peaks stretch into the distance and on the eastern side across the Bay there is a scenic view of Sandy Bay Barn and the green Central Ridge with Peaks in the background.

Seale's Battery

From the Beach looking towards Sandy Bay Valley there is a row of hills on the left hand side increasing in height until the fourth one is a high peak crowned with a great rocky outcrop which although not apparent from below, is serving as the base for Seale's Battery. The clues that a Battery existed in the area are on Cocks Map of 1804 and Barnes Map of 1811, but the Admiralty Map of 1922 gives a more accurate position. There is no access track to this Battery and the climb up steep slopes strewn with sliding stones is extremely hazardous.

Seale's Battery is very likely named as a tribute to Major William Seale of the St. Helena Artillery Regiment who is shown on Barnes Map of 1811 as being the owner of Wranghams, Sandy Bay. He died in 1834 and a memorial plaque to him exists inside St. Paul's Cathedral. With reference to Cocks Map showing it in 1804, it is likely that Seale's Battery was built late in the 18th century. At a height of 400 feet above sea level and about half a mile in a direct line from the Beach, this Battery had a good bearing on the west section of Sandy Bay Line also including a large area of the lower Valley, and if an enemy had landed to overrun the Line, Seale's Battery commanded a very strategic position to fire down on them as they attacked up the Valley.

The breastwork is semicircular shaped with a wall two feet thick rising a few feet up from solid rock base, but much of the wall crest is crumbling and there is scarcely any parapet to the platform which is a substantial area of 30 feet diameter. No gun exists here, nor was there any listed in the Melliss List of guns for 1825-36.

In addition to ruins of what was probably a guard house nearby, there is evidence of at least two magazine caverns in adjacent cliffs. From all accounts it would seem that Seale's Battery did not remain active for a very long period.



Plate 33: Ruins of Seale's Battery overlooking Sandy Bay

Four Gun Battery

Judging by the name this Battery must have once had four guns, but the size of the Battery today would never have allowed four guns to be sited there, the solution to this mystery perhaps being that the road course has been altered several times over the years, the battery site might have been modified, and today it is situated adjacent to one of the many "hairpin" bends on the main road to Sandy Bay.

It is obvious that this Battery was sited to defend Sandy Bay Valley from an enemy attacking up the Valley and it had very good command for this purpose. It is about one and a half miles from Sandy Bay Line, and opposite the great natural stone column of Lot. Just down the road is historic Jenkin's Cottage where Governor Robert Jenkins lived in 1740.



Plate 34: Ruins of Four Gun Battery with old Garriss Gun dated 1794, pointing down Sandy Bay Valley which it was meant to defend

Of a neat semicircular form and a sound gun platform of Portland stone slabs, the Battery has no doubt been restored, but it is the splendid old gun here that is the highlight. Mounted on a nicely designed four wheeled cast iron carriage, the 12 pounder Garriss Gun has the date 1794 cast in the end of its trunnion. The overall length is 8 feet and the calibre between 4 and 5 inches. Both the gun and carriage are in excellent condition.

Four Gun Battery does not appear on any of the early maps, thus rendering its date of origin as rather obscure, but it is shown in the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 as having one 12 pounder Garriss Gun on a stone platform which is exactly the same as at present.

It is not called Four Gun Battery on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 although the position is clearly shown.

Chapter 10

TURKS CAP SECTOR

Includes Turks Cap Bay Battery, Gregory's Battery, and Cox's Battery.



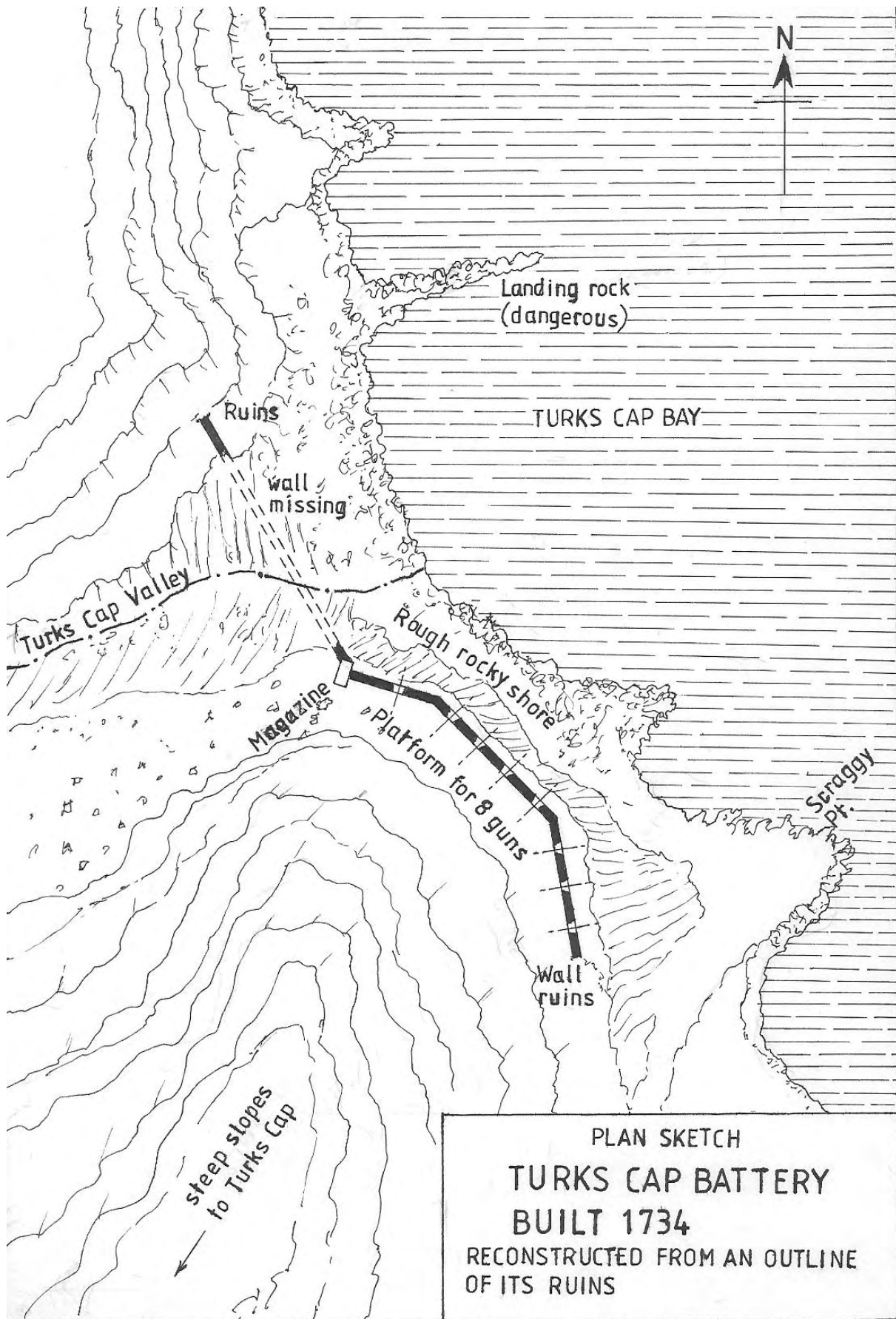
Plate 35: Turks Cap viewed from Cox's Battery

Turks Cap Bay Battery

This Battery is the only one in the Turks Cap area to be built close to the sea, it being situated on a small hilly eminence just a short distance back from the rough shoreline at Turks Cap Bay and it is here also that Turks Cap Valley enters the Bay. The striking rocky feature of Turks Cap itself rises nearby and it is a daunting task to reach even the base of it. Looming on the northern side is the enormous high mass of rock named The Barn with its Haystack on top.

On the recent map of St. Helena (1983) this Battery is designated as "Portugese Battery" and the Admiralty Map of 1922 gives it the same label, while the Palmer Military Map of 1850 gives the name "Dutch Battery" but it is now certain that both names were applied in error probably because due to its antiquated appearance the Battery was believed to have been built during the earlier Portugese or Dutch occupations. As confirmed by island Records and also mentioned by T. H. Brooke in his "History of Island of St. Helena" published in 1823, fortifications were commenced at Turks Cap Valley in 1734 and on 24th July of the same year it was recorded that the Battery for 8 guns, a Guard House and Powder Room were nearly finished. However a slightly later Record of 17th September 1734 gives Governor Pyke as

stating that the Turks Cap Battery was well advanced but with the Longboat being lost it could not be completely finished until three Longboat loads of Lime had been delivered.



Therefore it is quite conclusive that the Battery was built during this early period of the East India Company administration and there can be no doubt that it would have been manned by personnel of the St. Helena Regiments which had been established by the Company. In spite of the Battery being in a ruinous condition it is quite easy to check that the number of gun openings in the Battery wall are eight, which is exactly the same number of guns mentioned in the Records.

It is obvious that the Company decided a Battery was necessary for this locality to prevent its possible use as a landing place by an enemy. There is a rocky ledge jutting out to the sea and known as the Landing Rock which could have been used to get men and equipment ashore when sea conditions permitted. Certainly the Battery was well sited in giving the 8 guns a wide sweep of fire over full extent of the Bay area.

In September 1742 only 8 years after the Battery had been built, Governor Lambert said that Turks Cap Battery could easily be defended but the works were badly constructed and in ruins, with the mortar the stones were laid in being nearly consumed, and the Battery was little more than so many stones placed together, all indicating that the Battery had been badly neglected during its short existence.

Facing the sea on three sides the Battery wall has now collapsed into heaps of flaked stones between the gun openings. At the end of the platform there is the remains of a small structure that appears to have been a magazine and it is exhibiting an unusual arched stone roof formed with flaked blue slabs of basalt.



Plate 36: Ruins of Turks Cap Bay Battery. Built in 1734.

There are the remains of 5 old cannons, one of which is lying on the rocks below and the others within their openings on the platform, but most of these have disintegrated, only two being in one piece and even these are splitting into flakes from the corrosive effect. They

are designed for carriage mounting of which there is no sign, and have an overall length of 8 feet.

Adjoining the Battery and also on the opposite side of the Valley there is evidence of a wall that must have been built across to block up the Valley entrance. This defensive practice of sealing up the sea end of Valleys was used elsewhere around the island and some of the more prominent of these are included in the Chapter on Walled Up Valleys.

There is no sign of any other building in the area, but this is not surprising when account is taken of the massive boulders and rocks that have come crashing down from the precipices above, and no doubt any other structure has long been smashed to pieces.

From the antique nature of its style and the extremity of corrosion to the cannons, there is no doubt about the vintage of this Battery but due to the extremely difficult access it is unlikely that there are many who would be inspired enough to visit this old relic.

Gregory's Battery

Nearly a quarter of a mile inland along the ridge from Cox's Battery the position chosen for Gregory's Battery ensured an excellent high elevation on a precipice overlooking Turks Cap Valley and having a wide coverage of Turks Cap Bay for which it was intended to defend. By the time Gregory's Battery was built the old Turks Cap Battery below had long been in ruins, and thus Gregory's was then the only effective fortification to prevent a landing at Turks Cap Bay.

Cocks Map of 1804 shows Gregory's Battery together with a telegraph station in the near vicinity, a rather interesting addition as the telegraph system had only been introduced by Governor Patton in 1803. The Battery is now in a very reduced condition, the walls having fallen off to almost ground level where these are seen as being of semicircular form. In 1825-36 the Melliss List showed that Gregory's Battery had one 9 pounder and one 12 pounder Garris Guns on two wooden platforms.

At some distance from the Battery other small ruins are not much more than a heap of stones. Apart from the impressive view of Flagstaff Hill and The Barn there is very little to enthuse on about the ruins of Gregory's Battery.

Cox's Battery

Sited on top of a precipice and divided from Turks Cap by a ravine, this Battery is accessible by a rough track along the ridge from Gregory's Battery. In spite of it being located in the Turks Cap area Cox's Battery was positioned to have its guns bearing on Prosperous Bay, and serving as a support for Prosperous Bay Battery which together with its Martello Tower is clearly visible in the distance.

There does not appear to be any Records available for Cox's Battery except a reference on Barnes Map of 1811 which shows it in error as being the furthest inland of two batteries, the other being Gregory's Battery. It seems that Cox's Battery was probably built during Governor Beatson's term of office, at some time between 1808 and 1811 when it was first shown on a map. The Palmer Military Map of 1850 does not show any Battery in the position of Cox's although it gives a Battery further inland for the position of Gregory's without naming it. Both the 1922 Admiralty Map and the modern map of St. Helena show both Batteries in the area as ruins.



*Plate 37: Ruins of Cox's Battery
Built c. 1810 overlooking Prosperous Bay and in view of the Signal Station on the skyline*

Certainly today Cox's Battery is a ruin, but the loose stones to the breastwork indicate that it was a semicircular shape. The Melliss List of 1825-36 gave this Battery as having one 12 pounder and one 24 pounder Carronade with two wooden platforms.

Some walls are still standing of a ruined building about 30 yards away and with its high elevation Cox's Battery is a splendid position from which to gain orientation of the coastal scene on this sector of the island.

Chapter 11

HIGH KNOLL FORT

As the largest military installation on the island, High Knoll Fort is also the only inland Fort, and effectively the only fortification that was not directly intended for the purpose of coastal defence. Built on top of prominent High Knoll at a height of nearly 2000 feet it has a near perfect situation for a fort, with observation that covers a very large area of the island.



Plate 38: High Knoll Fort viewed from Barren Hill

However it was not the first Fort built there, as the Records show that the first defence works at High Knoll were built in 1790 during Governor Robert Brooke's term of office. Several prints and sketches of this Fort were made during its early years, but mostly it was shown from a distant view, one of the best and clearest being drawn by Captain Barnett and published 31st July 1806, it can be seen in the Map Library section of the British Library. It shows the Fort consisting simply of a high square structure having two outer towers and stone ramparts.

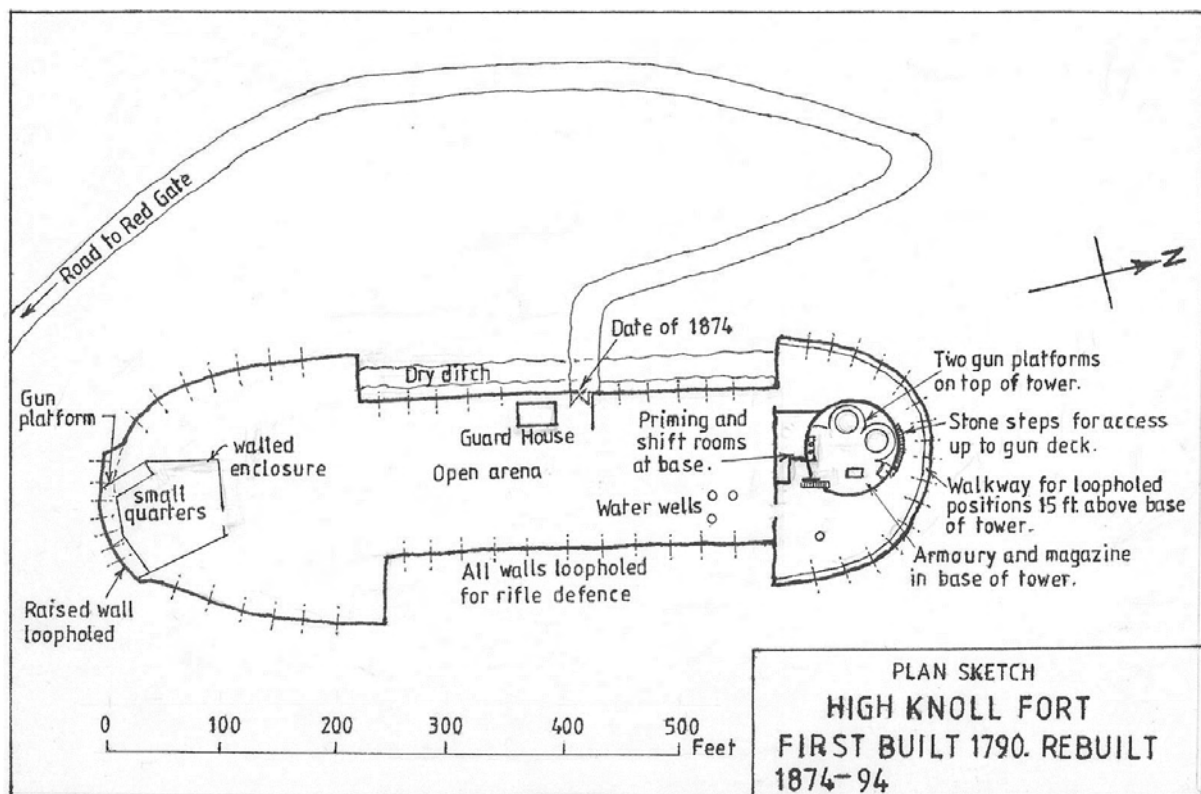
This original Fort is shown on Cocks Map of 1804 and Barnes Map of 1811. On 21st December 1811 a mutiny occurred at Jamestown Barracks by 250 men of the St. Helena Regiment who set out for Governor Beatson's residence of Plantation House, but many fell out en route leaving only 75 men who were forced to surrender and placed in custody at High Knoll Fort. Six of the more guilty soldiers were brought to immediate trial and hung at the Fort.

On the Read Map of 1815 the Fort was named High Knoll Citadel but was more generally called the Fort. In 1816 Governor Lowe recommended High Knoll to be a covering Fort for

Ladder Hill if an enemy made a successful landing and secured the high ground to the rear. The 20th Regiment of Foot arrived from England in March 1819 during Napoleon's captivity, and were stationed for a period at High Knoll Fort. After Napoleon's death in 1821 all the British regiments were withdrawn from the island in 1822, and then ensued a number of years during which the Fort did not seem to have appeared in the Records. From the Melliss List of Guns of 1825-36 the Fort then had two 14 pounder iron guns and eight 18 pounder Carronades.

Following a phase in England from the early 1860's to the 1870's during what has been termed a period of "fortification mania", the decision was made to build the present massive High Knoll Fort on the same site. A plaque above the arched entrance has a date of 1874 which probably signifies the earliest stage of the project. The purpose of High Knoll for its second phase was apparently two-fold, firstly to have guns bearing on James Valley and Ladder Hill if the enemy had broken through either of those coastal defences, and secondly to serve as a retreat for Island residents who could be protected there during any siege. Certainly the size of its large walled-in arena was very sufficient for the latter purpose. The Royal Engineers who had units on the Island from 1853 were responsible for building the Fort which it seems was not completed until about 1894.

Available records are quite scarce for the new High Knoll Fort, but the following inscription carved on a stone wall of the gun deck, offer some clues. These are - PK RA and TK RA 1894, being apparently two members of the Royal Artillery stationed there in 1894.



During the Boer War of 1899-1902 when 6000 Boer prisoners of war were held on St. Helena, the most dangerous Boers were kept in confinement at the Fort. Otherwise it was never presented with a situation where its value as a fortification could be proved.

Except in certain sections of a superficial nature, High Knoll Fort has survived in a good sound condition. Basically the Fort is built in an elongated shape running north and south, with the main section of a large tower structure including gun platforms on top, being at the northern end. Overall sizes of the area contained by the perimeter walls are approximately 200 yards in length and 80 yards in width, while at least 90 percent of the total area is open ground all within the surrounding high walls.



Plate 39: North end of High Knoll Fort

The semicircular wall around the northern end is 30 feet high above the base, and is shielding the tower which is divided from it by a wide corridor that has access through arched stonework to loopholed musketry positions in the external wall. A further tier of loopholed positions with a terraced walkway is formed above. The circular tower of 70 feet diameter has two gun emplacements, each with a circular iron traversing track and a gun pivot point at the centre.



*Plate 40: Loopholed platform at High Knoll Fort
Steps up the side enter the tower, and gave access to gun platforms above.*



*Plate 41: Gun platforms on top of High Knoll Fort with Flagstaff Hill in the distance.
Pivot points and traversing tracks for guns are shown.*

There are no guns at the Fort now, but an approved list of armaments for High Knoll Fort in 1881 listed four 20-pounder R.B.L. guns which were then a new development. As there were only two gun platforms, two of these must have been spare guns. In addition, two 64-pounder R.M.L. guns were also listed, but it is a matter of conjecture as to whether these were ever mounted at the Fort.

Considering the large area of the tower, two guns seems to have been a rather limited armament for the upper deck, although the platform area has been restricted by the massive 6 feet thick stepped breastwork. A small stone building on the platform east side is now a station for space tracking by a field representative from America. The south side of the tower has two circular metal shafts that were used to hoist ammunition from the magazines far below.

There is very little evidence if any, that concrete was used as a building material on the Fort, but large areas including the gun emplacements are cement rendered.

The large warren of lower compartments in the tower base were no doubt serving as an arsenal, the amount of work involved in constructing these being quite incredible. Many of the compartments are linked with hatchways at an upper level and large thin slabs of Portland stone were used in many positions as a soffit some of which have fallen down. None of this lower area would have been suitable for quarters of any kind, as it is not only very damp but there is scarcely any means of ventilation.

Built on to the tower base at the south side are a series of what appears at first to be prison cells, but on further inspection they are seen to be within the same block where there is access to the base of circular shafts for hoisting ammunition, and also the thick walls of the small rooms have long hatchways typical of magazine serveries of the period for issuing shell cartridges. In effect it would seem the ammunition was first removed from the arsenal, taken to the small shift rooms for priming and then hoisted up the shafts to feed the guns above.

An interesting feature on the north side is in the flight of stone steps that rise up the tower to an entrance from where a further short flight of steps inside the tower once led up through an opening to the gun deck, but the opening has long been blocked off with stonework.

The Fort has four water wells of two feet diameter, one of these within the tower area while the others are located in the arena. Adjacent to the Fort entrance is the Guard House which has an interesting arched brick ceiling and a small fireplace.

The present pair of iron gates are not the original, in fact from a study of an old mechanism mounted on each wall inside the entrance it does seem that the only facility it could operate would be a drawbridge. An endless chain or rope turned a large wheel above, which was in turn connected by a shaft to the opposite side. Through a system of gearing and pulleys, a chain on each side would then have transmitted the raising or lowering motions of the drawbridge. The mechanism does not seem as if could possibly have been used to open swing gates which in any case are normally opened and closed by hand. Outside the gates on each side running along the wall is a long open ditch which gives further strength to the existence of a drawbridge. Students of the Technical Trades Centre at Ladder Hill might be interested sometime in carrying out a research project on the engineering logic of this old relic.

Continuing along the spacious arena or parade ground as it must have often been used for, a series of musketry loopholes can be seen all along the walls of both sides. On reaching the south end, an extensive semicircular row of small compartments and rooms are believed to have been used as stables, but they are too extensive for having been originally intended to fit that purpose, as at least one or two had a small fireplace, while the arched window openings and doorways show considerable feature towards the probability that they were built for quarters. Above these is a terraced platform all around the semicircular wall which has the largest loopholes of the Fort, suggesting that these might have been meant for heavier armament than musketry.

For a very long time High Knoll Fort has been used as a quarantine area for animals, which necessitates public access being prohibited for occasional periods of one month. It would be unfortunate for any visitor whose stay on the island coincides with a quarantine period of High Knoll, because it is one of the highlights that should be seen. From the tower gun deck there is the most expansive and impressionable view of the island, while the Fort itself is displaying a classic example of 19th century military design.

Footnote on High Knoll Fort:

A large section of the west perimeter wall to the north of the gatehouse fell down in 1994 during stormy weather on the island. Plans were made to rebuild this section, but by 1997 it had still not been attempted.

Chapter 12

LADDER HILL FORT

If you are interested in making a sightseeing visit to Ladder Hill Fort from Jamestown, the most appropriate route providing you can muster up sufficient energy, is the climb up 699 steps of Jacobs Ladder, from which during an occasional rest you will get a good impression of the old part of the Fort as you ascend, plus a magnificent view of the Harbour and Jamestown if you dare to look down. As you finally arrive on the top step, you will be 602 feet above sea level and probably feeling like another short rest.

The history of Ladder Hill combined with the Fort is long and very interesting, though in earlier times it was also grisly. Ladder Hill appears in the Records of 1733 when it was usually called Fort Hill which meant the hill above James Fort at Jamestown, but there were then no fortifications on Ladder Hill.

Practically the only use made of Ladder Hill for well over 100 years after the beginning of East India Company rule, was as a place of execution where criminals were hung in chains. The gibbet was positioned at a point where the flagstaff now stands, and was prominently in view of all Jamestown so that after an execution it would serve as a grim deterrent. As there was no road to Ladder Hill then, the access to there must have been an old zigzag track the ruins of which can be seen up the slopes of Ladder Hill today, some of it walled up for safety.

The first carriage road to Ladder Hill was built in 1770, but it was not the same route as the present road via upper Jamestown. In 1789 it is recorded that Ladder Hill was adopted as a military post, and water conveyed there in an open drain, later improved by an aqueduct from near High Knoll. Meantime the Governor, Colonel Robert Brooke, who had arrived in 1787 was thoroughly revising the island defences to suit up to date strategy, and with his experience in India of similar terrain he used this to advantage in having new forts and batteries built on higher positions. One such project was Ladder Hill where he had the first fortification works built in 1790. Due to the ongoing wars in Europe, Governor Brooke anticipated that there was a threat to the island, and in 1797 he had the fortifications at Ladder Hill strengthened by an additional Tower mounting two 12 pounder guns to aid in covering the rear of the works, and by a battery of two 18 pounders on a point overlooking the sea. Of the Tower it is difficult to envisage where it may have been, as there is now no sign of such a fortification nearby, but the two guns overlooking the sea almost certainly would have been at the position where two large iron traversing tracks are embedded in the gun emplacements on the lower side of the Barracks parade ground.



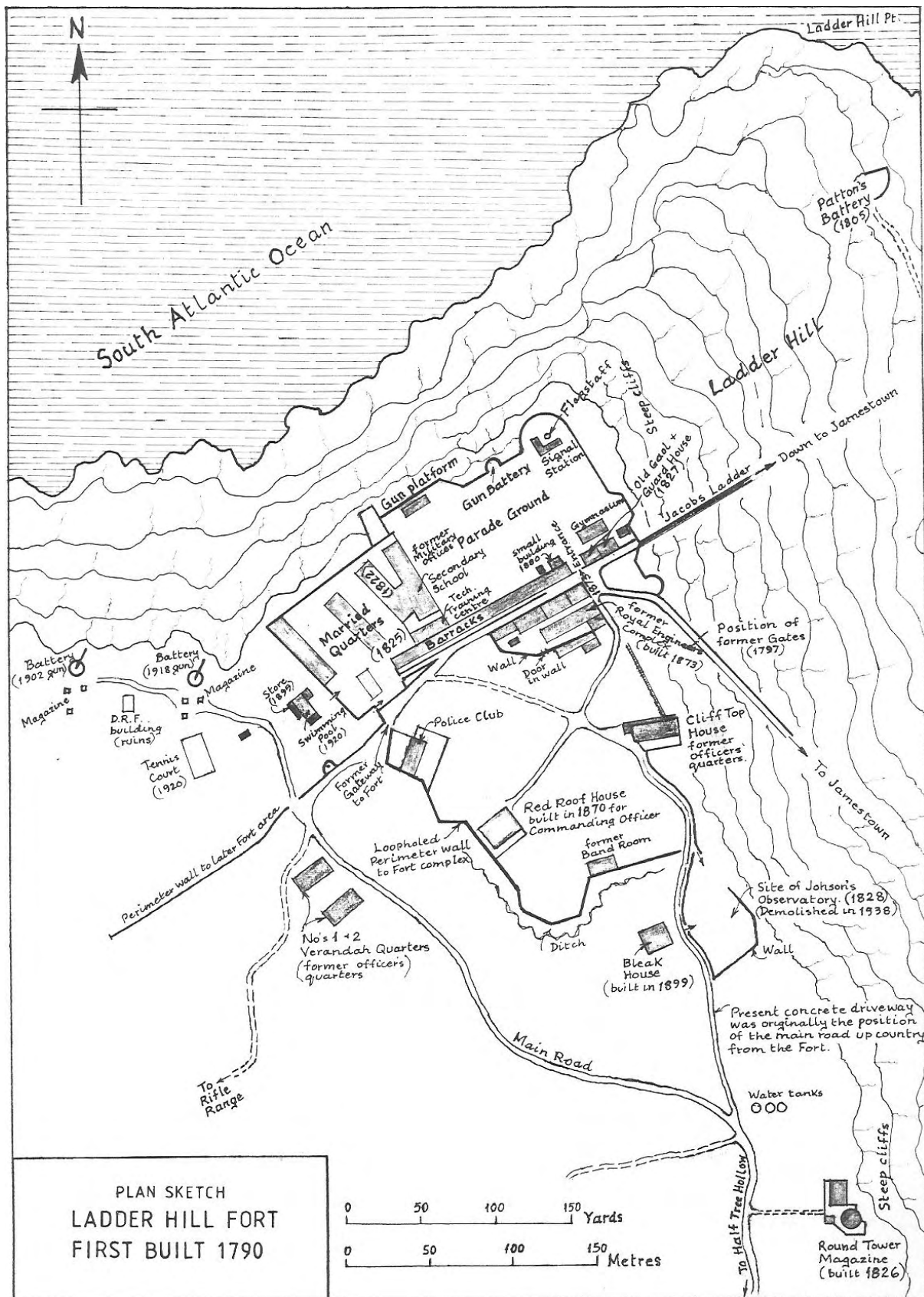
Plate 42: Ladder Hill Fort. Old gun platforms believed to be first used in 1797.

Governor Brooke also said that a barrier gate had been constructed with works flanking it on the road leading from town to Ladder Hill, and stones had been collected in heaps ready to throw down. Certainly it is known where the barrier gate was, because its position survived at least until a new road was built from upper Jamestown to Ladder Hill in 1882, in fact even today there are pieces of old loose iron attached to the outside of the wall and believed to have belonged to it. Benjamin Grant in his book "A Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" of 1883 mentions this gate.

The first map to show any installation at Ladder Hill is Cocks Map of 1804 which only shows a small barracks, but a Battery was shown at Ladder Hill on Barnes Map of 1811 which also included a Battery further east nearly to Breakneck Valley. Ladder Hill Fort was first shown as such on the Read Map of 1815, also indicating a Telegraph Station for the interlinked signalling system introduced by Governor Patton in 1803.

By the time of Napoleon's captivity on the island (1815-21) the strategic value of Ladder Hill Fort for commanding the approaches to Jamestown Harbour had become fully recognised and there is no doubt that additional guns were sited there during this period, and at least one old gun that can be seen lying on the shore rocks far below is likely a relic of those, but there are no guns at the old part of Ladder Hill Fort today except a small signal gun which is within the perimeter of the residence at the Signal Station. A mortar battery was also recorded as having existed at the Fort during this period.

Up until this time the St. Helena Regiment had been responsible for manning the Fort but after British troops had arrived to strengthen the garrison, it is known that at least in 1819 the 20th Regiment of Foot were quartered there for a period. The Ladder Hill Military Barracks that was later greatly extended, is justified by merit to be included amongst the Historic Buildings, and a detailed account is not attempted with this work.



In addition to the Barracks, offices and residential quarters, further extensive works were developed under General Walker, the Governor from 1823-28. The Round Tower Magazine commenced in 1822 was completed in 1826 on a site about 400 yards up on the cliffs overlooking Jamestown. Enclosed by a wall the capacious Tower is rising nearly 20 feet with an iron ladder giving access to the roof which has a loopholed turret from where the Magazine could be defended with musketry. Masonry of squared and coursed stone is of a good standard and the main door is copper faced. Smaller buildings within the perimeter have slate roofing but this and a small office at the gate entrance require considerable restoration.



Plate 43: Ladder Hill. Round Tower Magazine. Built in 1826

Lower down the hill from the Round Tower Magazine and opposite Bleak House there is at present a large open space of ground that extends to the cliff edge overlooking Jamestown with only some scattered remaining bases as evidence that some building once existed there. This is the site of the former Observatory of the Military Institute founded by Governor Walker who felt that the young officers of the St. Helena Regiment required some interesting pursuit to allay any boredom from their normal military duties.

The observatory was set up in 1828 by Lieutenant Manuel Johnson who compiled his Catalogue of the Southern Stars there. This Observatory functioned until 1834 and finally in 1836 after all the instruments had been disposed of, it was converted to an Officers' Mess. Later in 1877 it was the Royal Artillery mess room, still described as an Officers' Mess in 1903, and eventually was pulled down in 1938 to provide building stone for the new bridge from the Town gates to the Wharf. The foundation stone of 1827 now rests in the Castle foyer.

Following the termination of East India Company administration on St. Helena in April 1834, the St. Helena Regiments were disbanded and the island was garrisoned intermittently from 1836 by various British units. Very little additional development took place at the Fort until the latter half of the 19th century with the impetus increased from the early 1870's when there was an active phase of fort construction being carried out in England.

Probably the first major new addition to the Fort complex was the large 2 storey stone residence now called Red Roof House which was erected in 1870 for the Commanding Officer of the Royal Artillery, and during the 1939-45 World War it served as the Sergeants' Mess. This commodious building is incorporated within a high wall which was built in an irregular shape to form a security barrier around the complete area. Where the main road now passes by a corner of the present Police Club, there was a main gateway that gave the only-access into the Fort from this side.

The perimeter wall extending up the hill has a regular series of loopholes for defence purposes, and a further measure included an open ditch in front of the wall. Barnes Map of 1811 showed a similar wall, but it then enclosed a larger area and was of different shape.



*Plate 44: Ladder Hill Fort. Perimeter wall loopholed for musketry defence.
Behind the wall is Red Roof House.*

In addition to various military residences within this perimeter, a substantial complex that was built for the Royal Engineers included stores, workshops, and theatre, in 1883, while a much later phase of their service at Ladder Hill Fort, is signified by the Royal Engineers crest dated 1944, and mounted above the entrance to one of the buildings now converted to private residential use. All these old military buildings are still Government owned, but in recent years there has been several privately owned houses built in the area.

The arched main entrance to Ladder Hill Barracks and Parade Ground, has a date of 1873 which probably signifies a phase of extensive alterations and additions to the Fort. The sea-facing side of the Parade Ground sloped down to a long platform where a large battery of guns were mounted during the latter period of the 19th century when the Royal Artillery frequently manned the Fort. During their extensive service the Barracks became known as "Artillery Barracks".

Another function of the old Fort is revealed in the Burial Register at the Castle Archives, recording that on 24th May 1879, Gunner John Gallard of the Royal Artillery was killed when he fell over rocks at the Battery on Ladder Hill while in the execution of his duty in firing the 9 o'clock gun in the evening.

At this time St. Helena remained very isolated from the outside world, and the telegraph cable was not to be landed on the island until 1899. Although it was the age of steamships, these took on average about four weeks to achieve the voyage from St. Helena to England. And that was the only means of communication. Therefore in the event of an attack on the island, two months would elapse before any response was received to an urgent request for military reinforcements.

The concern felt by the islanders on their vulnerability to possible invasion was probably quite justified, particularly as the old defensive system of fortified lines developed by the East India Company had long since become obsolete and abandoned. For a long period the presence of the Royal Navy at St. Helena during the anti-slavery campaign at sea, served as a deterrent to any aggressor, but after their complete withdrawal in the early 1870's, a new apprehension was soon evident.

Their fear that the existing small garrison force was inadequate, is reflected by Benjamin Grant who was a vigorous spokesman and also published the "St. Helena Guardian", the island's only newspaper. Fortunately for history, many copies of this have been preserved in the Castle archives at Jamestown.

In his "Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" of 1883 Benjamin Grant described Ladder Hill as the principal Fort on the island, which indicates the extent to which it had been upgraded, particularly in view of the massive High Knoll Fort then in the course of construction. He also went on to state that "there was a battery of Artillery, a Company of Infantry, and a few Royal Engineers on the island, in all about 200 men, but what could these do to protect shipping, as there were not even sufficient men to man half the batteries in the event of a bombardment".

No doubt there were even more misgivings concerning the lack of potential for the island to defend itself when the entire British garrison was removed by the "Cluny Castle" on 30th October 1906, and St. Helena was left for the first time ever without a garrison. Even the local St. Helena Volunteers were disbanded about the same time.

Meantime however the threatening clouds of conflict in Europe were seen as too ominous to ignore, and the realities of the situation led to construction of new batteries at Ladder

Hill, while in 1911 a Royal Marines detachment arrived on St. Helena to take over command of the military establishment based at Ladder Hill Fort.

Due to rapidly improving development of new gunnery techniques, the old guns at Ladder Hill Fort had become obsolete along with their battery style, as a result of which the two new batteries were sited on the far western side of a large open area that was divided from the married men's quarters by a high security wall in which an opening was made to give access to the new batteries.

The first building to be erected in the area was a stone structure dated 1899, and presently used as a store there is a gun practicing loader dated 1939 lying outside. About 1920 a swimming pool was built adjacent to this building but it is now disused.

It is not possible to give a precise date when the two naval type guns were installed in the later batteries but they were not both positioned there before 1918 because the latest date on one of the guns is of that year, while the other of 1902 although much earlier does not necessarily prove that it was the first to be mounted. Both guns and batteries are identical to each other, being sited near the cliff edge within 100 yards apart. Each is turret operated and mounted on a 6 feet high steel pedestal which is bolted to a large circular baseplate in the sunken platform of the battery that is raised and circular in form with splayed breastwork at front, constructed of squared stone rendered and overlaid with a large amount of concrete surfacing.



Plate 45: Ladder Hill Fort. Battery with armoured turret-operated naval type gun (1918).

Overall length of the rifled 6 inch gun barrel is about 23 feet excluding the percussion cap which was a screwed on attachment. Hand operated ratchet mechanisms gave both

horizontal and vertical adjustment for bearing, and the loading end of the gun is shielded by an armour plated casing that rises 7 feet above the battery surround.

An ammunition hoist is visible on the same level as the gun plat-form, shells being raised by a hand operated chain driven conveyor from the magazine below. Several ammunition lockers are situated at the base of platform surround. There are three separate underground magazine chambers close to the battery, each being interconnected below, and the one closest to the battery has a davit for lowering the shells by pulley block down into the magazine.

These guns had a range of about 7 miles and were known to have fired shells that reached the locality near Prosperous Bay Signal Station some 6 miles distant. They were not maintained after 1946. During the 1914-18 World War and up until 1939 Ladder Hill Fort was under Admiralty command and garrisoned by the Royal Marines, but in 1939* Fort reverted to Army command by the Royal Artillery, although a small number of Royal Marines remained to service specialised equipment.

It is a fact that many visitors to St. Helena are so intrigued with the feature of Jacobs Ladder that they invariably take up the challenge and climb to the top of Ladder Hill where there is a fascinating array of historic relics that should be preserved.

* Footnote: In October 1939 during the Second World War, the German pocket battleship "Admiral Graf Von Spee" was sighted off St. Helena, and these two 6-inch naval guns were readied for action, but the Governor ordered that they were not to fire as the 'Graf Spee' had such tremendously heavy armaments which would have reduced the Island to debris.

Chapter 13

COLEMAN'S TOWER

Less than half a mile from High Knoll Fort and situated on top of a cliff that forms part of Stone Top Hill, these ruins do not have the appearance of ever having been high enough to justify being called a Tower, but nevertheless historical evidence proves that they were called Coleman's Tower. It is an ancient looking structure now no more than 4 feet above ground on the upper side and about 10 feet on the lower, having a perimeter of 18 feet square with poorly built walls of ordinary rocks rather than building stone, but a little sophistication is added by rounded corners.



Plate 46: The ruins of Coleman's Tower, c. 1790

Although it is over a mile distant from Ladder Hill Fort, there is a possibility that this was the Tower referred to by Governor Brooke in 1797 as being built to protect the rear of that Fort, and its style certainly fits in with the period.

The earlier High Knoll Fort also built by Governor Brooke in 1790 did not then have the advantage of a high gun platform, and its guns would not have been able to depress into Breakneck Valley, thus giving a further reason for siting Coleman's Tower as it directly overlooks the upper end of that Valley, and it would also have had a good bearing on the hill slopes below High Knoll Fort if an enemy had broken through to attack it.

It is first shown as a Battery on Barnes Map of 1811 but was not then called Coleman's Tower, and there was another nearby Battery shown on the same map, although now no sign of it. In the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 there was no mention of Coleman's Tower.

This fortification has been known as Coleman's Tower for a long period because it was named on the Palmer Military Map of 1850, but not shown as a Battery. The name has not survived on later maps and locally there does not seem to be anything known of it. An old stone wall running along the full length of the same cliff is obviously part of the same works carried out when the Tower was built. Prior to the new road called Sappers Way being constructed by the Royal Engineers in 1978, the Tower was no doubt difficult of access, but now it is within 100 yards of the road although the approaches have to be made through private property.

Perched on its cliff site directly above historic Kent Cottage, the ruins of Coleman's Tower must have attracted at least a small measure of curiosity by those who espy it from New Ground or Plantation roads.

Chapter 14

POWELL'S BATTERIES

Situated at lower Powell's Valley and built for the purpose of preventing a landing at Powell's Bay these two Batteries have a very good elevation of 900 feet above sea level, about 200 yards apart and perched on ledges of high cliffs flanking the Valley at this end.

With very little in the Records to go on, the research for Powell's Batteries presented difficulty, but with reference to the possible use of Powell's Bay by an enemy, Governor Patton stated in 1804 that he "thought it very desirable to close up this back door to the island".

It was then found that Powell's Batteries were shown on Cocks Map of 1804 which proved that these had been built and the project was almost certainly put in hand by Governor Patton who was known for his endeavours to improve the island's fortifications.

Powell's Valley, Powell's Bay, and in turn Powell's Batteries were conceivably named in respect of an earlier resident Gabriel Powell who was prominent in island affairs during a period of the 18th century.

Subsequently on Barnes Map of 1811 there were three Batteries shown for Powell's Valley and the third Battery did exist at a height of 98 feet according to the Melliss List of 1825-36 but it cannot be found now. Later maps including the Palmer Military Map of 1850 and the Admiralty Map of 1922 only show two Batteries.



Plate 47: Powell's East Battery with old Garriss Gun dated 1810

Taking the east Battery first, this is the nearest to Powell's Bay probably only about 400 yards away in a direct line, but with its high commanding position any enemy ship trying to get into the narrow confines of the Bay would have been an easy target. Shaped as a quarter circle the platform surface is level with a rounded stone rubble wall as breastwork on the seafacing side, while a rear wall 3 feet thick and 30 feet long is carried up to 5 feet high with two gun embrasures allowing the gun to bear into and up the Valley if required. It is the only type of Battery like this on the island.

Lying on the platform is an old 12 pounder Garris Gun of 8 feet in length and 4 inch calibre, still in sound condition although the surface is rusty. A date of 1810 appears on one end of the trunnion and the touch hole has been spiked. The gun is exactly the same type as specified for this Battery in the 1825-36 Melliss List. To complete the scene at this Battery there is the ruins of an old guard house about 30 yards away. The strategic placing and unusual design make this installation an interesting military relic.



Plate 48: Ruins of Powell's West Battery with Powell's Bay in the distance

The west Battery is only about 200 yards away in a direct line but because of a ravine forcing a deviation, the route between the two batteries is at least 400 yards around a deplorably rough track that was once partially walled but is now totally ruined and requires a great deal of careful footwork to negotiate it.

At one glance it can be seen that the west Battery has no resemblance to the other in form, but with a more direct bearing on Powell's Bay it is superior to the east Battery for looking in that direction. With rock face at the rear where it has been cut out, the breastwork wall facing the Valley is semicircular, some of it two feet above platform level and the remainder fallen down with much loose stone-work. This Battery can only be considered a ruin.

Presently there is no gun, but the two ancient wood posts set in the breastwork indicate the remains of a wooden platform which existed according to the 1825-36 Melliss List that also gave one 9 pounder Garris Gun and one 12 pounder Carronade. This Battery also has ruins of a guard house about 50 yards up the hill. There was no evidence of a magazine at this site but there are many natural caverns in nearby cliffs that could have served for that function.

Both these Batteries are set below the heights of Long Range which at 2000 feet above sea level is the terminating peak of Long Ground Ridge. An old telegraph station shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 was situated on Long Range, forming part of the interlinked signalling system introduced by Governor Patton in 1803. In 1954 an old 3 pounder gun with a bore of 3 inches (now in the Local Museum) was recovered from Long Range by the Land Survey Team, and it is estimated as being circa 1750-1800. It might have formed a link with the audible signalling system of gunfire used before the abovementioned system superseded it. Other similar small guns have been found on strategic peaks around the island, and there is still one similar such gun lying across a track below Mt. Acteon.

There is no doubt that the Telegraph system would have been a valuable facility for Powell's Batteries as these are situated in a very isolated region of the island, and signals from the station on top of Long Range would have been easy to read or vice versa. On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 the access track to Powell's Batteries is clearly shown starting from near Rock Rose Cottage which is now a ruin, but it was a historic residence, one of its occupants having been Colonel Edward Wynyard who was on St. Helena from May 1816 to June 1820 as Official Military Secretary to the Governor Sir Hudson Lowe. The walk along this narrow track from Rock Rose to the Batteries is one of the most scenic on the island; a distance of about one mile through a forested section and then via the upper slopes of Powell's Valley below Long Range from where a splendid view of Powell's Bay and the Valley is introduced as the track runs down a steep rocky hill to the west Battery.

Although the third Battery seems to no longer exist it must have been of quite some extent because the guns listed show four 24 pounders and one 18 pounder Carronade as given in the Melliss List of 1825-36.

Chapter 15

THOMPSON'S VALLEY SECTOR

Includes Thompson's Valley Battery with Martello Tower, Eagle's Eyrie Battery, and Guard House on High Hill.

Thompson's Valley Battery with Martello Tower

Built on the cliffs above Thompson's Bay at a height of 202 feet above sea level, Thompson's Valley Battery has a very dangerous access from above because a walled up path originally-made for this purpose has been crushed down by rock slides.

This is another Battery on which it is difficult to put an accurate date as to its origin. Major Rennell in his 1777 Report on Thompson's Valley stated that the Valley was walled up (see Chapter on Walled up Valleys) but no fortifications. He suggested some redoubts armed with cannon to be constructed there for the purpose of commanding the heights above and it is fairly certain that his idea led to the building of Thompson's Valley Battery. Barnes Map of 1811 indicates two Batteries but no sign of a second Battery can now be found on this side of the Valley. These then are the best clues available that Thompson's Valley Battery was built at some period between 1777 and 1811.

From the look of the old gun there is a strong inclination to put an earlier date on this Battery. Mounted on a very makeshift wood carriage with iron wheels the gun is a Carronade nearly 6 feet overall length, a bore of 9 inches, and a breech of very large diameter specially reinforced to counteract bore pressures when firing probably a 24 pounder shot. Due to surface corrosion there are few markings visible on the gun except a broad arrow on the breech.



*Plate 49: Thompson's Valley Battery with old Carronade Gun.
Black Rock islet in the distance.*

The semicircular shaped breastwork wall is 24 feet diameter and two feet thick of mainly squared stone built up a few feet from cliff rock with the crest 3 feet above platform level and displaying some very creditable masonry. In addition to Thompson's Valley Island which is overlooked by the Battery, the old Valley wall can be seen below to the extreme left.

There are no guns listed for this Battery on the Melliss List of 1825-36 although it is mentioned by name as having a wood platform of which there is certainly no evidence now. On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 the Battery position is shown without a name, together with a nearby Tower.



Plate 50: Martello Tower above Thompson's Valley Battery. c. 1820

This latter installation is referred to as a Martello Tower by Major Robert Francis Seale who in 1823 produced some excellent island elevations which are now mounted on the wall of the main staircase at the Castle, Jamestown. Major Seale (1791-1839) does not really seem to have received sufficient recognition for the valuable work he achieved, as he also published "The Geognosy of St. Helena" in 1834, and completed a model of the island which was exhibited at Addiscombe College in England. It has been stated that he received £1000 for this work. During his career Major Seale was initially a Deputy Storekeeper, later a Superintendent of Printing, and finally Colonial Secretary from 1836 until his death in July 1839. Wherever this type of Tower occurs in this work, the same term of Martello Tower has been used for introducing these.

Therefore it is established that from Major Seale's elevations of 1823 the Martello Tower near Thompson's Valley Battery certainly existed at that time and most likely its construction was not far behind the Battery if not at the same time, because these Towers served as a small fort for the Battery they were protecting from a sneak land attack, and were defended by musketry.

Although the Tower is now a ruins, enough of the walls are still standing to give an impression of its original form. It is about 22 feet square, but with the corners all being well radiused this tends to give it more of a circular appearance. With the highest point of remaining walls up to 20 feet above sloping ground, the height may have originally been a few feet more than this. The seaward wall has mostly fallen down but neatly splayed loopholes on the remainder reveal a good standard of masonry which is carried out in a mixture of red and blue stone, some squared and coursed, interspersed with rubble sections. Walls are at least 2 feet thick and the mortar joints have been restored at some stage helping to preserve what is left of the Tower.

In his book "St. Helena-Buildings" (1976) P. L. Teale stated that there was a masonry mark of I. McKay 1833 on the Tower but the author could not find this, and if it were so it must have been some work carried out much later than when it was originally built.

On its elevated site overlooking the Battery and the sea, this Tower together with additional building ruins just below, are now another of the many military relics dotted around the island. A very rough two miles of foot track from near High Hill House is the only access route possible to these ruins and this track has existed for a very long time. Access down into the Valley from the Tower has become dangerous due to rock falls on the steep slope.



*Plate 51: Martello Tower in the distance, above the cliffs of Thompson's Valley Bay.
The Battery situated just below is not visible.
Peaked Island can be seen off the coast.*

Eagle's Eyrie Battery

For those who want a real challenge in getting to dangerous places, the Eagle's Eyrie Battery is perfect for that purpose because it is perched at 203 feet above sea level on the high cliffs to the south side directly above Thompson's Valley wall, and due to heavy rock falls scouring the steep slopes access from there is not possible although it was once the normal access. The author was presented with a real problem in getting there, and eventually reached the Battery by first proceeding to the Man and Horse Cliffs near Joan Hill at South-West Point and then striking overland to slide down on the Battery from above.

Eagle's Eyrie Battery appears to have been built later than Thompson's Valley Battery because it is not shown on Barnes Map of 1811. In the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 the term used of "west side" must certainly be a reference in which it is shown as having two stone platforms which still exist. Later the Battery position is marked on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 and the 1922 Admiralty Map gives it as a ruins.



*Plate 52: Eagle's Eyrie Battery
Probably built 1815-21 during Napoleon's period of captivity on St. Helena.*

There must have been some very urgent necessity to build Eagle's Eyrie Battery on its perch, as it appears to be an almost impossible situation to consider constructing anything, and of all the batteries to be seen on the island this is the closest to being inaccessible. A fairly apparent reason for it being built lies in the fact that Thompson's Valley Battery could not get a bearing on any ship approaching along the coast from the north, whereas Eagle's Eyrie is perfectly situated for its guns to bear in that direction.

Built in circular form of 20 feet diameter the stone breastwork two feet thick rises to a height of 8 feet and at present the wall crest is level with the platform which is well laid with flat paving stones. Lower sections of the wall have at some time been restored with lime mortar but the top layer has no mortar. There is no gun here now but it can only be wondered at the difficulty in raising these from below.

A view from Eagle's Eyrie includes nearby Black Rock Island, Thompson's Valley Island, and part of Egg Island is visible, while a great stretch of the Atlantic Ocean extends to the horizon. For those who may get to Eagle's Eyrie from above it cannot be recommended for the return journey, an alternative being to proceed for a distance below a precipice to the upper end of a short steep valley, slide to the Valley floor, and then pick a way down to Thompson's Valley wall from where there is a punishing climb up almost sheer slopes to reach the normal track running uphill from the Martello Tower near Thompson's Valley Battery.

Guard House on High Hill

The ruins of this old Guard House are situated on top of High Hill, in fact the survey marker to indicate the highest point is alongside. Very dominant above upper Thompson's Valley,

the impressive feature of High Hill rising to a height of 2356 feet above sea level has long been recognised as a strategic point of observation, as in addition to taking in a vast expanse of the sea it overlooks a large western sector of the island.

From the Records of July 1734 it is shown that outguards were then kept at High Hill and at the same time a visiting Frenchman, Monsieur Gasherie who purported to be an expert on defence strategy, stated in his report of 15th July 1734 that if an enemy landed at Manati Bay, some of the "High Hill party" could go down to assist. The considerations given by M. Gasherie were not favourably received by the Council.

As the highest peak in the south-west corner of the island it was logical that some kind of military presence should be established on a permanent basis at High Hill especially in view of the fortifications that were later established at Thompson's Valley. The Guard House is shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850 but almost certainly existed long before then.

Although it is possible that guns were mounted on High Hill this cannot be now proven but the ruins of this old Guard House are still very evident. With only the lower part of walls standing, the building is seen to have been about 25 by 15 feet in area.

Best access to High Hill is via the steep eastern slope where it is a matter of picking a way up the rocky face through a plantation of tall trees known as The Firs and once on top there is a track leading along a ridge to the summit.

There can be nothing more exhilarating than a pleasant afternoon hike up to High Hill, and the magnificent panorama including The Spyglass of Old Woman's Valley, Swanley Valley, The Saddle in the background, and great Central Ridge to the east, will add to make it more memorable.

Chapter 16

GOAT POUND RIDGE

As shown on Cocks Map of 1804 a telegraph station then existed on Goat Pound Ridge to form a link in the military signalling system introduced by Governor Patton in 1803, but the first evidence of guns being positioned there is on Barnes Map of 1811, and the Read Map of 1815 also indicated guns, although neither referred to it as a Battery.

The first positive reference for Batteries installed there is from the Melliss List of Guns for 1825-36 which gives an East Battery with one 18 pounder Carronade, and a West Battery with two 12 pounder Carronades. For an additional unspecified position there were one 12 pounder and one 6 pounder Garris Guns.



Plate 53: Old Garris Gun on Goat Pound Ridge looking into Lemon Valley Bay

On studying the situation of Goat Pound Ridge it can be seen that it is to windward of Lemon Valley Bay, and in effect an enemy ship having some design to attack the Fort there would have had to keep close in when passing below Goat Pound Ridge, the extreme end of which had a good position for guns to look straight into Lemon Valley Bay. The Ridge at about 750 feet above sea level also gave a commanding position above adjacent Valleys, in the event that a landing attempt might be made at either Young's Valley or Friar's Valley.

This then seems to be the reason why it was decided early in the 19th century to fortify Goat Pound Ridge. No doubt the Goat Pound wherever it was belonged to the unfortunate early

era when goats had been allowed to overrun the island, destroying much of the indigenous vegetation until a campaign was mounted to eliminate all the wild herds.

On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 several installations shown can be interpreted as the Batteries although not specified, but today all of it is in ruins that are very difficult to identify.

An old gun in splendid condition is lying almost half over the cliff and by chance is pointing at Lemon Valley Bay which it was probably meant to defend. It is a 6 pounder Garris Gun with a calibre of 4 inches and overall length about 6 feet.

On the east side of the Ridge above Friar's Valley there are the ruins of at least two buildings, while further in at the centre are some interesting ruins of a sunken building that may be the remains of the telegraph station. A platform in better condition is situated on the western side overlooking Young's Valley.

With a good track from New Ground Road via Cleugh's Plain, the area containing old fortifications at Goat Pound Ridge is very accessible together with a superb view of Lemon Valley Bay and the coastline.

Chapter 17

COCKBURN'S BATTERY (EGG ISLAND)

This fortification has the unique feature of being St. Helena's only Battery situated on an offshore island, even though Egg Island qualifies by a slender margin to be considered an island because it is joined to the main island by a narrow ridge which is only fully submerged at higher tides, otherwise it is possible to wade across it although this would be futile for the purpose of gaining the top of the island, as sheer cliffs at that end are unscaleable.

In establishing the origins of Cockburn's Battery it is necessary to go back to the historically spectacular period of Napoleon's captivity on St. Helena (1815-21) because it was certainly built during this interval. The Battery is named after Rear-Admiral Sir George Cockburn who commanded H.M.S. Northumberland which brought Napoleon and his staff to St. Helena arriving on 15th October 1815. Admiral Cockburn who was in supreme command on the island, had considerable involvement with Napoleon during his stay until 19th June 1816 when he sailed for England on the Northumberland.



Plate 54: Egg Island

The site of Cockburn's Battery, built during Napoleon's captivity on St. Helena. (1815-21)

The possibility that Egg Island could have been used as a springboard in an attempt to free Napoleon was most likely the reason for fortifying it, as the western end has a point where small boats can come in subject to suitable sea conditions, but practically all of the other coastline consists of sheer high cliffs.

The island which is basically a huge mass of rock is one quarter of a mile long and about half that in width while the highest point of 264 feet above sea level is towards the eastern end.

As its name implies Egg Island does have a liberal quantity of eggs when the sooty tern colony is nesting there, not that their nest appears to be as such, because it is basically any rock indentation that is considered suitable for themselves without any other trimmings. And whilst nesting their greatest displeasure is to have any intruder on the island, a point which is made very clear to visitors.



Plate 55: A newly hatched sooty tern chick near Cockburn's Battery on Egg Island where the parents are not keen on visitors!

This then is the island that was vital enough to be fortified during Napoleon's captivity. Even today with all the works in ruins it can be seen that these were of a very extensive nature. After ascending very rough steep slopes from the landing rocks, the main Battery is revealed as a large circular area of 30 feet diameter with some heap of loose stones lining the outer perimeter or breastwork that it must have been.



*Plate 56: Cockburn's Battery with three 6-inch 24 pounder Garris guns on Egg Island
(Stedson Stroud in photo)*

Three old guns spaced evenly around the platform are lying there rather forlornly without their carriages. About 10 feet long and a calibre of 6 inches they have too much surface corrosion to identify any date, but it is quite obvious that these are the three 24 pounder Garris Guns shown on the Melliss List 1825-36 for this Battery, and the three stone platforms also fit from the List.

At the eastern end of the Battery are the ruins of a small shot heating furnace with domed roof and built of red stone. A short distance further up the hill towards the summit there are further ruins of buildings totally collapsed, while continuing over the summit and down the eastern side several heaps of ruins were all structures of some kind. At the far eastern end is a small ruined circular Battery that could only have been the East Battery shown on the Melliss List as having a 24 pounder Carronade on a wood platform. There was also a mortar Battery situated somewhere.



*Plate 57: Shot heating furnace ruins at Cockburn's Battery
(Ivy Randall in photo)*

It seems likely that the Royal Artillery was stationed on Egg Island in 1819 because in the Castle Archives there is a Burial Register which records the death on 28th November 1819 of a soldier in the Royal Artillery, whose body was found in a shark caught by fishermen off Egg Island. It is believed he was surprised and taken by the shark while he slept on the rocks at Egg Island.

Another tragedy at Egg Island is recorded on the memorial plaque in St. James Church to George Singer who fell to his death there, but no date is given and it is not known if he was a member of the Garrison.

On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 all the buildings were shown as well as the Batteries, and with a Garrison also being specified, it suggests Cockburn's Battery was still active at that time. However judging by the condition today, it must have faded out long before the end of the 19th century.

A visit to Egg Island is a wonderfully interesting experience, not only for historic reasons to view the old military relics, but also the scenic aspect and fascinating bird life to be found there. There is certainly some caution required in respect of quickly changing sea conditions in the area, as was emphasised by a tragic fatality during August 1983 when two officers from the fuel supply ship "Bosun Bird" went for an afternoon run in an inflatable dinghy to Egg Island where they capsized in a heavy swell. One of the officers managed to swim ashore to Egg Island where he spent the night until a search party arrived the following morning, but no trace of his companion was ever found.

Chapter 18

HORSE PASTURE SECTOR

Includes Horse Pasture Battery with Martello Tower, and Guard House at Horse Pasture.

Horse Pasture Battery with Martello Tower

The area named Horse Pasture is extending around a large sector of the west coast bounded by massive cliffs and bearing inland to join the upper slopes of Lemon Valley over on its eastern perimeter. With such a naturally impregnable coastline it does seem at first to be surprising that a Battery was considered necessary there, but on studying the early fortifications on this side of the island, it can be seen at that time between Half Moon Battery at Lemon Valley Bay and Thompson's Valley Batteries to the south, there was no intermediate coastal fortification in a distance of over four miles.

Therefore Horse Pasture Battery was built to close this gap and it was positioned equidistant from the two batteries mentioned above, on lower cliffs almost opposite Lighter Rock. As Major Rennell stated in his 1777 Military Report there was no fortifications at Horse Pasture then, and nor is there anything shown on Cocks Map of 1804 or Barnes Map of 1811. A positive indication that such a Battery existed is in the Melliss List of 1825-36 where it is shown as having two 18 pounder Garris Guns on two wooden platforms. The Palmer Military Map of 1850 clearly shows the Battery together with the Tower and in view of the reference number it may have still been active then.

Due to heavy rockfalls in the locality, the form of this Battery no longer exists, but at least two of the iron rings cast in rock for hauling up the guns can still be seen near the site.

If there had been no other evidence that Horse Pasture Battery existed the Martello Tower could have served as the proof, because any-where on the island where a Martello Tower was built there was always a Battery nearby. This type of Tower for musketry defence was meant to cover the Battery from any sneak attack, also serving as a point of observation. The Tower is situated on top of the cliffs overlooking the Battery for which it was acting as a sentinel. Today this old Tower is just a ruins with only its lower wall portions standing and it really does look decrepit. The corners were rounded and a series of narrow loopholes are in the walls which show the mortar used was of poor quality.

It is not possible to establish the height, but in area the Tower is about 15 feet square. There are several other ruins of small buildings nearby, and judging by the condition of these and the Tower it seems certain that this fortification must have been given up long before the end of last century.

There is an arduous overland journey in reaching the Battery and Tower, as even with the mobility available via Horse Pasture road there is still a punishing two mile hike down a

narrow fishermens' track beset by dense prickly pear scrub, turning left along another mile long tortuous track to the Tower and Battery site. The reverse journey is much more of a marathon as the going is all uphill, and it seems unlikely that many sightseers would feel inclined to make the journey there. There is not one horse at Horse Pasture today but some sections of it are used as a donkey pasture.



Plate 58: Ruins of the Martello Tower built to protect Horse Pasture Battery, c. 1820

Guard House at Horse Pasture

From where the Horse Pasture Road terminates, it is at least two miles walk down the slopes covered with prickly pear and rough rocky outcrops in order to reach the old Guard House situated at Horse Pasture north end, and immediately above Half Moon Battery. This old relic is reduced to a very ruinous condition with only part of the side walls standing but it was worthy enough to be shown on the Palmer Military Map of 1850, and it could belong to an early period perhaps even the 18th century because it was built of flaked stone slabs to form walls of three feet thick without any visible mortar, the same type of construction that was used to build the magazine and walls at Turks Cap Battery which was built in 1734.

Chapter 19

MAGAZINE AND GUARD HOUSE AT HOOPER'S RIDGE

Although there is no reference in any records to this old Magazine, the Guard House in the near vicinity is shown on Barnes Map of 1811, and as the latter building is in such a state of ruins, it is reasonable to believe that the very sound and well built Magazine is a later installation.

On first reflection there does not appear to be a sound reason for having a Magazine at Hooper's Ridge because there were no batteries to be served in the immediate area, but some individual guns may have been temporarily placed in the locality. The more likely explanation is that the Magazine was used as a Depot for distributing powder and cartridges to the Batteries at Thompson's Valley and a gun that was believed to have been placed at South-West Point. In fact the Thompson's Valley Batteries were known to be still active between 1825-36, and that could well be the period when the Magazine was built.

On the Palmer Military Map of 1850 the Guard House is named "Old Picquet House" seeming to suggest that it was no longer used, but the Magazine named as such was very likely still used at that time. Benjamin Grant in his book "A Descriptive Guide to St. Helena" (1883) stated that in 1880 a man, his wife, and two children, lived in the Magazine for a few months. It is only about 6 feet long and 5 feet wide; he saw the mother and children there on a "bleak rainy day" and added that no one but themselves would know how they managed to sleep in it.

On the 1922 Admiralty Map the description "Old Picquet House and Magazine" is used. Secluded in the woods, the Magazine today is as sound a structure as ever it was. With buttressed walls and arched roof about three feet thick, all built of stone rubble, it has quite an antique appearance. A mystery recess is in the rear wall and a large recess on one side wall is loopholed. There is no door to the arched opening now but it must surely have had one when it was in service. Around the outside are a few concrete fence posts indicating that in more recent times it was fenced in.

The old Guard House nearby is almost a total ruins with very little of its walls still standing. From it there is a good view of Sandy Bay.

Chapter 20

SUMMARY OF THE MILITARY UNITS THAT SERVED ON ST. HELENA

St. Helena Artillery and Infantry Regiments

Formed after the island was reoccupied in 1673. In 1716 the total complement of officers and soldiers was 140.

A large detachment of the St. Helena Infantry Regiment sent as reinforcements to Madras, India, arrived there on 6th October 1783 1783

St. Helena Artillery and Infantry Regiments served at the Cape as reinforcements for the British occupation. The St. Helena force consisting of 11 officers and 400 men was commanded by Captain Francis Seale, and on 7th Sept. they attacked the Dutch camp at Muizenburg from which the enemy immediately fled. The nine guns of the St. Helena Artillery cleared the way for the occupation of Cape Town and the Cape surrendered on 16th September 1795

Garrison increased on St. Helena by Governor Brooke. 1796

St. Helena Artillery and Infantry Regiments sent as reinforcements for General Beresford's campaign against Buenos Aires. The St. Helena force consisted of 282 men. 1806-07

Both Regiments took part in the procession at Napoleon's funeral. During this period the Regiments had a combined total of 700 men 1821

St. Helena Regiments disbanded after termination of East India Company administration. 1834

St. Helena Regiment was the name given to a new unit which was formed in England and arrived at St. Helena on 4th. October 1842. No record was found of this unit after 1868. 1842

St. Helena Militia

Formed after the island was reoccupied in 1673

Mentioned as giving assistance to suppress a mutiny by the Garrison. 1811

In the procession of Napoleon's funeral on 9th May, as the St. Helena Volunteers	1821
In the parade at Jamestown after the exhumation of Napoleon's body, and procession through James-town to the French ship "Belle Pole".	1840
St. Helena Volunteers disbanded after the British garrison had been withdrawn from the island.	1906
Reformed as St. Helena Volunteer Sharpshooters, name changed to St. Helena Rifles in 1918.	1914-18
St. Helena Rifles	1939-45
St. Helena Home Guard	1939-45

British Military Units

Note: The presence of many units to have been on St. Helena was gleaned from Official Registers at the Castle Archives, but does not necessarily give the full period of their service on the island. Names of Regiments in brackets are 1965 titles.

53rd Foot Regiment, Shropshire, 2nd Batt. 500 men of this Regiment served as the garrison guarding Napoleon.	1815-17
66th Foot Regiment, Berkshire, 2nd Batt. Served as the garrison guarding Napoleon.	1816-17
66th Foot Regiment, Berkshire, 1st Batt. Served as the garrison guarding Napoleon, and were in the procession at his funeral in 1821.	1817-21
Royal Artillery. Took part in the procession at Napoleon's funeral in 1821	1817-22, 1836, and many other periods of the 19th century. 1939-45
20th Foot Regiment, Lancashire Fusiliers. Served as the garrison guarding Napoleon, and at his funeral procession 12 Grenadiers carried his coffin to the tomb at Sane Valley on 9th May 1821.	1819-21

Royal Engineers:	2nd Company	1816-19
	32nd Company	1861-69
	7th Company	1869-76
		Smaller units served from 1853 and other periods of the 19th century.
Royal Marines.		1939-45
Participated in the procession at Napoleon's funeral, 9th May 1821.		1821, 1843, 1911-40
91st Regiment of Foot	(Argyll & Sutherland) (Highlanders)	1836-40
First garrison on the island after St. Helena became a Crown Colony under the British Gov't. Arrived on St. Helena, 24th February 1836, with the new Governor, Major-General Middlemore.		
In the parade at Jamestown after the exhumation of Napoleon's body on 15th October 1840 and the procession through Jamestown to the French ship "Belle Poule" en route to France.		
21st Regiment of Foot	(Royal Highland Fusiliers)	1836
6th Regiment of Foot	{Royal Warwickshire Fusiliers}	1836
27th Regiment of Foot		1843
22nd Regiment of Foot		1843
55th Regiment of Foot		1844
87th Regiment of Foot		1852
80th Regiment of Foot	(Staffordshire Regiment)	1854
10th Regiment of Foot	(Royal Lincolnshire Regiment)	1865
77th Regiment of Foot		1865
99th Regiment of Foot		1867-68
90th Regiment of Foot	(Queen's Own Highlanders)	1868

88th Regiment, Connaught Rangers	1878
Sutherland and Argyll Highlanders	1882
2nd Northamptonshire Regiment (Duchess of Gloucesters Own Royal Lincolnshire & Northamptonshire Reg.)	1884
 Royal Scots	 1888
 84th York and Lancaster Regiment	 1891
Royal Army Service Corps	1891
1st East Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire)	1891
 2nd West Riding Regiment	 1894
Medical Service Corps	1894
Royal Army Medical Corps	1901, 1916
3rd Middlesex Regiment	1899-1902
97th Coy.Royal Garrison Artillery	1899-1902
84th Coy.Royal Garrison Artillery	1899-1902
3rd Buffs Battalion (The Queen's Own Buffs) (The Royal Kent Reg.)	1899-1902
 Royal Berkshire Regiment (The Duke of Edinburgh's) (Royal Reg.(Berks.& Wilts)	 1899-1902
 1st Gloucestershire Regiment	 1901
2nd Gloucestershire Regiment	1901
4th Gloucestershire Regiment	1901
3rd Batt. West Indian Regiment	1898-1900
North Staffordshire Militia	1900
3rd Manchester Regiment (The King's Regiment - Manchester & Liverpool)	1902
3rd Royal Sussex Regiment	1902
3rd Wiltshire Regiment (The Duke of Edinburgh's) (Royal Reg. Berks.& Wilts.)	1902

Note

Following the end of the Boer War in May 1902, the British garrison was rapidly reduced until the remnants were all withdrawn by the S.S. "Cluny Castle" on 30th October 1906, and St. Helena was for the first time without a garrison until the Royal Marines arrived in 1911.

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