

= Hobart coastal defences =

The Hobart coastal defences are a network of now defunct coastal batteries , some of which are inter @-@ linked with tunnels , that were designed and built by British colonial authorities in the nineteenth century to protect the city of Hobart , Tasmania , from attack by enemy warships . During the nineteenth century , the port of Hobart Town was a vital re @-@ supply stop for international shipping and trade , and therefore a major freight hub for the British Empire . As such , it was considered vital that the colony be protected . In all , between 1804 and 1942 there were 12 permanent defensive positions constructed in the Hobart region .

Prior to Australian Federation , the island of Tasmania was a colony of the British Empire , and as such was often at war with Britain 's enemies and European rivals , such as France and later Russia . The British had already established the colony of Sydney at Port Jackson in New South Wales in 1788 , but soon began to consider the island of Tasmania as the potential site of a useful second colony . It was an island , cut off from the mainland of Australia and isolated geographically , making it ideal for a penal colony , and was rich in timber , a resource useful to the Royal Navy . In 1803 , the British authorities decided to colonise Tasmania , and to establish a permanent settlement on the island that was at the time known as Van Diemen 's Land , primarily to prevent the French from doing so . During this period tensions between Great Britain and France remained high . The two nations had been fighting the French Revolutionary Wars with each other through much of the 1790s , and would soon be engaging each other again in the Napoleonic Wars .

The first British settlement in Van Diemen 's Land had begun on 8 September 1803 , at Risdon Cove on the Derwent River 's eastern shore . However , the arrival of Lieutenant @-@ Governor David Collins on 16 February 1804 , saw him make the decision to relocate the settlement to Sullivan 's Cove on the western shore of the Derwent River . Within days of the settlement 's establishment , Collins had decided the new colony would need protection should the French send warships up the river to threaten the fledgling colony . A crude earthwork redoubt was dug into an elevated position near the centre of Sullivan 's Cove , in the area that is now Franklin Square , and two ships cannons were placed inside . For the next seven years , this muddy emplacement would serve as the only defensive position of what was growing to become Hobart Town .

When Governor Lachlan Macquarie toured the Hobart Town settlement in 1811 , he was alarmed at the poor state of the defences and the general disorganisation of the colony . Along with planning for a new grid pattern of streets to be laid out , and new administrative and other buildings to be built , he commissioned the building of Anglesea Barracks , which opened in 1814 , and is now the oldest continually occupied barracks in Australia . Macquarie also suggested the construction of more permanent fortifications . Following his advice , a new location comprising an area of 8 acres ( 32 @,@ 000 m2 ) was selected at the eastern end of Battery Point on the southern side of Sullivan 's Cove , and construction began on what was to become the first of a series of new defensive installations .

= = Mulgrave Battery = =

By 1818 , the new battery had been completed on a location in Battery Point near the present Castray Esplanade , and was named Mulgrave Battery in honour of Henry Phipps , 1st Earl of Mulgrave , who was at that time Master @-@ General of the Ordnance . The battery had six guns which projected forward through earthwork embrasures . At first , these were ships guns , but in 1824 they were replaced with 32 pounders . Now Hobart Town had two firing positions protecting either side of the entrance to Sullivans Cove .

Upon its completion , the Mulgrave Battery soon attracted heavy criticism from those who had to serve there . Members of the Royal Artillery felt it was inadequate , and one critic is even said to have described the battery as " a poor pitiful mud fort . " Engineers reported that the gun carriages were a danger to men firing the guns , and so new timber was sent from Macquarie Harbour in 1829 to make them safer ; however , records showed that only one gun had been upgraded by 1831 . The same year , the galleries were improved with large 15 metre long sections of timber , heavy bolts ,

braces and bars .

As the colony began to grow larger , more British units were sent to serve in the settlement of Hobart Town . Amongst one of these contingents was a commander of the Royal Engineers named Captain Roger Kelsall , who arrived in Hobart in 1835 to take over HM Ordnance Department . When he arrived , he assessed these two fortifications , and wrote in his report that he felt the colony was virtually undefended . He devised an ambitious plan to fortify the whole inner harbour of the Derwent River with a network of heavily armed and fortified batteries located at Macquarie Point , Battery Point and Bellerive Bluff on the eastern shore . He envisaged the forts all having an interlocking firing arc , which would cover the entire approach to Sullivan 's Cove , making it impossible for ships to enter the docks or attack the town unchallenged .

The scale of the plan was enormous for such a small colony , the population being approximately 20 @, @ 000 in the 1830s . This meant that the cost was too prohibitive , considering that at that period the British Empire enjoyed relative peace with the exception of border conflicts in India . Nevertheless , despite funding problems , work using convict labour began in 1840 . Mulgrave Battery was enhanced and expanded , and a new site was located slightly further up the hillside on Battery Point , behind the location of the Mulgrave Battery , where construction also commenced in 1840 . A semaphore station , built in 1829 , and signal mast were constructed above Mulgrave Battery , allowing communication with ships entering the mouth of the river , and through a relay system of masts , all the way to Port Arthur penitentiary on the Tasman Peninsula .

The modern Hobart suburb of Battery Point takes its name from the Mulgrave Battery . The original guardhouse , built in 1818 which had been located nearby is the oldest building in Battery Point , and one of the oldest buildings still standing in Tasmania .

= = Prince of Wales Battery and Albert Battery = =

The new battery , named the " Prince of Wales Battery " , was completed in 1842 . That year ten new 8 @-@ inch ( 200 mm ) muzzle loading cannons were lifted into position , enhancing the firepower of the colony 's defences . Despite its significant firepower , the poor location and firing angles of the new fortress soon became obvious . The powder magazine was fitted out in 1845 .

The layout of the fortifications continued to have the Mulgrave and Prince of Wales batteries to the south of Sullivan 's Cove and the Queen 's Battery to the north , until the outbreak of the Crimean War with the Russian Empire . Fear of attack or even invasion by Russian warships of the Imperial Russian Navy , which were known to sail in the South Pacific , led to calls for review of Hobart Town 's defences . A commission was called and it found that further strengthening was needed . With the problems of the Prince of Wales Battery , it was decided a third battery , the Albert Battery ( originally called Prince Albert 's Battery after HRH Prince Albert , Queen Victoria 's Prince Consort ) , would be constructed even further up the hill , behind the Prince of Wales Battery .

By 1855 , the colony of Van Diemen 's Land was granted responsible self @-@ government by the Colonial Office , and renamed Tasmania . The Colonial Office began to pressure the newly formed local government to take more responsibility for the self @-@ defence of the colony .

As a result of these calls , the Tasmanian colonial government began to establish Volunteer Local Militia Forces . One such force , established in 1859 was the Hobart Town Artillery Company under the command of Captain A. F. Smith , formerly of the 99th . ( Wiltshire ) Regiment , who began to assume responsibility for the Hobart fortifications from the Royal Artillery who were increasingly being withdrawn , and had all departed well before the withdrawal of the last British forces from Tasmania in 1870 . Prior to this , in 1868 a Defence Proposals paper had been published which outlined the need for greater defensive fortifications . It also suggested the need for proposed batteries further to the south of Hobart Town on either side of the river .

Improvements to ship 's armaments meant that the existing fortifications , which provided covering fire to a range of approximately 2 @, @ 000 yards ( 2 @, @ 000 m ) , would allow enemy ships to ship outside the range of the defenders guns and still be able to bombard the town . This left the colony virtually defenceless .

Three Imperial Russian Navy warships , the Africa , Plastun , and Vestnik , arrived in January 1882

. Britain and its empire had fought against the Russians 26 years previously during the Crimean War and the colony was virtually defenceless . The Russians were on a goodwill mission , but had they had hostile intent , the colony would have easily fallen . As a result , the visit caused a great deal of debate about the state of the colony 's defences .

It had also highlighted the state of decay the existing fortresses had reached . Another Commission was carried out , and it was decided the Mulgrave , Prince of Wales and Albert Batteries were inadequate for the defence of the town . By 1878 , both had been condemned , and were dismantled by 1880 . In 1882 , the sites were handed over to Hobart City Council for use as public space , although the subterranean Prince of Wales magazine remains . Most of the stonework was removed and reused in the construction of the Alexandra Battery further to the south .

Following the closures , the entrance to the old magazine soon became a popular place for children to play , and at night , the underground magazine rooms often became a meeting place for men to drink and play cards , until they were closed and kept permanently locked by the council in 1934 .

To this day , the park in which the Mulgrave , Prince of Wales and Albert Batteries had been located remains a popular public park , and is named Princes Park in honour of the men who served in the batteries there , and as a reminder of the heritage of the site . The iron gate at the entrance of the underground magazine rooms can still be seen at the base of the park .

= = Queen 's Battery = =

As part of Major Roger Kellsall 's recommendations , another site to the north @-@ eastern side of Hobart Town was to be used for an additional fortification . This site , located almost exactly underneath the present site of the Hobart Cenotaph war memorial upon Queens Domain was first constructed in 1838 and opened the same year as Queen 's Battery , named in honour of HRH Queen Victoria , who was on the throne at the time of the fort 's construction . It had been envisaged that this would be the grandest of the forts in Hobart , and would command the prominent point overlooking the entrance to Sullivans Cove ; however , the full plans were never developed . The battery was set back by delays and funding problems , and was not completed until 1864 .

With the imminent withdrawal of British forces due in 1870 , a major review of defences had been carried out in 1868 . It was decided the current system was inadequate to cope with advances in naval ordnance , and two new forts would be positioned at One Tree Point and Bellerive Bluff . The Queen 's Battery was to assume the apex position of a triangular coverage of the entrance to Sullivans Cove .

As the Royal Artillery were to withdraw within two years , a handbook containing range tables was created by Staff @-@ Sergeant R.H. Eccleston which suggested that to repel a vessel doing 10 knots ( 19 km / h ) up the river would take 226 men approximately 30 minutes to fire 365 rounds from the 20 guns that were available from the existing three forts . Despite this , it became an operational position , and for a time served as an effective defence . The Queen 's Battery remained in operation until the 1920s . The excavation of the site in 1992 revealed the hot shot oven which was uncovered and metal parts for rolling the shot which had been preserved . The oven and archaeological trenches were later filled in at the request of the Returned and Services League ( RSL ) . Hot shot was intended to be fired at wooden ships and to cause ignition of gunpowder . It was never fired in anger .

= = Alexandra Battery = =

Following the condemnation of the Mulgrave , Prince of Wales , and Albert batteries in 1878 , it was decided to re @-@ institute the plans for the alteration of the defensive strategy around the entrance to Sullivans Cove that were first drawn up in 1868 .

A triangle of fortresses with the Queen 's Battery at the Apex , and two new batteries , the Alexandra Battery , named for Princess Alexandra , the Princess of Wales , and the Kangaroo Battery on the eastern shore would be adequate for the task . Construction began on the new fortifications in 1880 , and at the same time , a new permanent field artillery unit , the Southern

Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery equipped with two breech @-@ loading 12 @-@ pound howitzers and two 32 @-@ pound guns on field carriages , was raised .

Following the dismantling of the Battery Point batteries , much of the stonework was relocated to the Alexandra Battery . The Alexandra Battery site is now a public park with commanding views of the river , and much of the original construction is still accessible .

= = Kangaroo Battery = =

The presence of the Russian warships in the Derwent River in 1873 , and the condemning of the Battery Point batteries in 1878 had expedited the development of the Alexandra and Kangaroo Batteries .

The design of the fort was a pentagon shape that fitted conveniently into the point of the bluff above the cliff . The ditch , tunnels and underground chambers had to be cut out of solid stone and faced with masonry . Several loopholes and firing ports were fitted into the stone encasements to allow rifle fire from every aspect of the fort . In case of an attempted infantry assault , caponiers faced both landward sides of the fort , with firing positions facing each direction . This meant that the only position to safely assault the fort with infantry was up the sheer cliffs of Kangaroo Bluff . Access to the caponiers was through iron hatchways that opened into open passageways three metres deep . These in turn led to tunnels accessing underground magazines , stores , a lamp room , well and the loading galleries . The loading galleries were ingenious and allowed the guns to be muzzle loaded with shells dragged along a conveyor belt directly to the muzzle of the gun , when it was in a downward tilted position .

Construction of the Kangaroo Battery was begun when excavations began to be dug in September 1880 , according to the plans of Colonel Peter Scratchley , a Royal Engineer who had been placed in charge of overseeing construction of defences for all of the Australian colonies .

Work was intermittent and beset by funding problems and delays , but in May 1883 , Patrick Cronly was placed in charge of the construction on behalf of the Public Works Department , and under the supervision of Staff Officer Boddam , work was completed the following year with the arrival of two massive 14 tonne eight @-@ inch ( 203 mm ) cannons from England . The construction had cost £ 8 @, @ 150 ( A \$ 16 @, @ 300 ) at a time when labourers earned an average wage of about 4 shillings ( 50c ) per day . The guns fired shells weighing 81 @. @ 7 kg , and thanks to the barreled rifling , had excellent range and accuracy . In 1888 , two smaller QF 6 pounder Nordenfelt guns were added . Although the projectiles were only 2 @. @ 7 kg , they also had excellent accuracy and range . The same year , a Nordenfelt machine gun was mounted facing the entrance gate of the fort .

The first shots were fired on 12 February 1885 . Later that year , a dry mound , and deepened wet moat were added , as was further coarse @-@ work covered in broken bottle glass set in mortar . Fences were constructed around the moat in November 1885 when a local boy fell into the moat and drowned .

From 1887 , both the Alexandra and Kangaroo Batteries were being manned by detachments of the Southern Tasmanian Volunteer Artillery , as well as the Tasmanian Permanent Artillery . In 1901 Tasmania joined the new Federation of Australia , and all of the city 's fortifications passed into Commonwealth control . Kangaroo Fort remained operational until the 1920s , but never fired a shot in anger . In 1925 , all of the guns were buried as obsolete , and in 1930 , the Clarence City Council took over the site for use as a public park . In 1961 , the Scenery Preservation Board acquired the site , and in 1970 , the site was turned into a historical site , with the guns being dug up and put on display . The site is now operated by Tasmanian National Parks and Wildlife Service and is a major tourist attraction .

= = Fort Direction and Pierson 's Point = =

With the outbreak of World War II , the Department of Defence acquired land near South Arm close to the mouth of the Derwent River on the eastern shore , from Courtland Calvert and his sister in September 1939 . At first , the land was used purely as a training ground , with mock battles that

were disruptive to locals being fought day and night . But as war preparations evolved , the Commonwealth decided that the port of Hobart would require some degree of defence to protect the state 's vital zinc industry that was crucial to the war effort . Major Mark Pritchard was the first commanding officer of the new defences that became known as Fort Direction . By the end of 1939 , construction of two fortified six @-@ inch ( 152 mm ) Mk VII gun emplacements , and a small four room weatherboard control building had been completed . Soon there was also a flagpole and set of naval signals .

Throughout the war , a 24 @-@ hour watch was maintained every day , and the site was usually manned by at least 15 Royal Australian Navy personnel . A record of every ship entering the Derwent River between 1940 and 1945 was kept . Between 1941 and 1944 , both guns were regularly used for training exercises . Although never used in hostile action against enemy vessels , the guns were fired in anger once . A liberty ship entering the mouth of the Derwent River failed to obey instructions issued from the Naval Command on the hill above the fort , and one shell was accurately fired across her bow , which immediately resulted in the liberty ship hovering to .

On the opposite western shore of the Derwent River , another emplacement was constructed with one four @-@ inch ( 102 mm ) gun . However , several huts to house men were constructed at that location as well as a complicated underground tunnel and command structure . Local residents recall barbed wire still surrounding the site well after the war and the site ? s de @-@ commissioning . Nearby Goat Bluff was also the location of further underground tunnel systems .

The only enemy action to ever affect Hobart happened on 1 August 1942 , when a submarine @-@ launched Japanese spy plane flew from the submarine ? s mooring in Great Oyster Bay south along the east coast of Tasmania , before flying northward along the Derwent River surveying Hobart and then returning to its mother submarine . Although both emplacements detected the flight , the plane was at too high an altitude to fire upon , and no aircraft were available to intercept it . After this event , two anti @-@ aircraft guns were positioned on nearby hills , but the Japanese never returned to Tasmania again during the war .