

= Fort Pasir Panjang =

Fort Pasir Panjang or Labrador Battery is located within the lush Labrador Park at the southern tip of Singapore island . It was one of the 11 coastal artillery forts built by the British in the 19th century to defend the western passageway into Keppel Harbour against piracy and foreign naval powers . During the 1942 Battle of Pasir Panjang , the fort played a supporting role but a limited one in defending the Malay Regiments against the Japanese invasion at Bukit Chandu . In 1995 , the site was gazetted by the National Heritage Board as one of the 11 World War II sites in Singapore .

= = History = =

Labrador was named after Labrador Bay which it overlooks the deep and calm water off its shores . The Long Ya Men or " Dragon 's Teeth Gate " , two craggy granite outcrops formerly stood on each side of the entrance to the New Harbour (now Keppel Harbour) as a navigation landmark to ancient mariners . The two rock outcrops were subsequently blown up by the Straits Settlement surveyor , John Thomson , in August 1848 to widen the entrance to the harbour . Labrador 's strategic value was recognised by the British as early as 1843 when plans were made to set up defences to protect Singapore , an important trading post founded by Sir Stamford Raffles of the British East India Company in 1819 .

= = = Piracy = = =

The New Harbour was later renamed as Keppel Harbour in 1900 after Admiral Sir Henry Keppel of HMS Meander , who carried out an on @-@ site survey to build an anchorage in the harbour in the 1880s . He was also known for his successful campaigns against the pirates in 1842 that were boldly harassing merchant ships in close proximity to the harbour . Piracy became less of a danger to the trade of Singapore only from the 1850s .

The original , Western Harbour limit is marked by a white obelisk , near the former site of Long Ya Men . This obelisk still stands at Tanjong Berlayer Point (" Tanjong " means " land 's end " in Malay) to indicate where the southernmost tip of the Asian Continent was .

= = = Defenses = = =

In 1878 , as part of the review of the defences of Singapore against threats from European powers in the region , it was decided that forts be built on either side of the entrance to New Harbour . Fort Pasir Panjang was built on Labrador and Fort Siloso on Pulau Blakang Mati (now Sentosa) . It was found that the steep cliffs and thick mangrove swamps surrounding the two forts acted as an ideal natural barrier to intruders .

= = = = Underwater mines = = = =

To strengthen the defence further , by 1881 , mines were laid in the waters between the two forts and the eastern entrance of the harbour . The mines were tethered to the seabed but floated dangerously under the surface of the water unseen to any enemy marine vessels . To enable safe passage of ships , a ' friendly safe channel ' was created through the minefields . The work involved in the laying of minefields under the narrow channel (just 240 m apart) had actually led to rumours that tunnels running under the channels were constructed to link the two forts . There are , however , no archival records to prove that these tunnels were ever constructed .

= = = = Gun emplacements = = = =

The Fort came under the operation of the 7th Coast Artillery Regiment , which received orders from Faber Fire Command led by Brigadier A.D. Curtiss . A gun emplacement is a position or platform

specially prepared to support large heavy guns and artillery . The first type of gun put on Fort Pasir Panjang was the 7 @-@ inch Rifled Muzzle @-@ Loading (R.M.L.) . Two of these guns were first installed in 1878 so as to provide a temporary defence for the fort . They were , however , removed soon after .

The defence reviews of 1885 , then proposed that these guns be reinstalled together with the 9 @. @ 2 @-@ inch Rifled Breech @-@ Loading (R.B.L.) guns . While the latter guns came into the Fort much later , the 7 @-@ inch R.M.L. were already in place by 1886 .

In 1896 , a proposal was forwarded to replace the 7 @-@ inch R.M.L. gun with two 6 @-@ inch Quick @-@ Firing (Q.F.) guns . This came out of the suggestion that the 7 @-@ inch R.M.L. has neither sufficient range accuracy nor rapidity of fire for effective defence . Even the engineer of the Fort , H.E. McCallum referred to these guns as being " the worst in the service " .

The emplacement was eventually modified to contain 2 × 6 in (152 mm) Q.F. guns . This modern type of gun definitely better in terms of its accuracy and rapidity to counter the speedy motor torpedo boats that appeared in the 1880s . Each shell used by these 6 @-@ inch Q.F. weighed 45 kilograms .

== = 7 @-@ inch rifled muzzle @-@ loading gun == =

Weight : 6 @. @ 5 tons .

Muzzle velocity : 1 @, @ 500 feet per second (460 m / s) .

Rounds per minute : 2 ? 3

Type of ammunition used : Common shells , shrapnel shells and case shots .

== = 6 @-@ inch quick @-@ firing gun == =

Weight : 7 tons .

Muzzle velocity 2 @, @ 150 feet per second (655 m / s) .

Rounds per minute : 25 ? 30 .

Maximum range : 15 @, @ 700 yards (14 @, @ 400 m) on a central pivot .

== = The Casemate == =

The Casemate was built in 1886 to serve as an ammunition store for the guns . It also acted as a shelter for gunners and infantry groups stationed at the Fort . It is situated at the highest point of the hill and served the 9 @. @ 2 @-@ inch R.M.L. guns nearby . The casemate has four rooms , one of the rooms held the entrance to a tunnel that led to underground store rooms beneath the first emplacement . Lim Bo Seng , a war hero of Singapore , was a major brick supplier in the late 1930s , with his main client , the colonial government . Bricks supplied by Lim lay in certain sections of the casemates at the Fort . His other projects included the construction of Alexandra Hospital , the army barracks in Changi and many defence works in the 1930s .

== = Tunnels == =

The tunnels , constructed in 1886 , leads to underground storerooms constructed to serve gun emplacements located directly above it . To date , the tunnels serving Gun Emplacement III is the most extensive tunnel discovered at Labrador Park .

As one walked into the tunnel , there is an enlarged chamber allowing for two @-@ way human traffic . This was important since the walkways in the tunnel tend to be very narrow . The tunnel then splits into two . One leads to the cartridge storeroom and hoist area while the other leads to the shell storeroom and hoist area . A hoist is a mechanical pulley system to lift the shells and cartridges from the underground room to the emplacement above it . The allocation of separation hoists for the shells and the cartridges allows for convenience and a more systematic operation of the gun above it .

===== Uses of the underground rooms =====

The underground storerooms played important roles in the Fort . For one , they protected ammunition from being ignited by enemy fire . Secondly , the use of hoists facilitated easy movement and retrieval of ammunition . Thirdly , the tunnel provided protection for the gunners not involved in the actual manning of the gun . Lastly , they help to protect the gun and gunners above from any accidental explosions in the underground room itself . The underground tunnels lead to the following areas :

Lighting room ? Given the inflammable nature of the store , no naked flames were allowed in any rooms with the exception of this room .

Cartridge room ? For the storage of cartridges .

Cartridge lift area ? Where the hoist raising the cartridges to the emplacement aboveground was found .

Filled shell store ? For the storage of shells filled with gunpowder .

Shell lift area ? Where the hoist raising the Filled Shells to the emplacement aboveground was found .

===== Japanese invasion =====

Before the onset of World War II (WWII) , Fort Pasir Panjang was subsequently upgraded to Labrador Battery . Tank obstacles , land mines and beach defences were put in place around the Fort . Air bases and garrisons were quickly sited in Malaya to counter the Japanese invasion threat . In anticipation of a coastal attack , 11 forts and gun batteries protected the coastal south of Singapore :

Fort Pasir Panjang

Fort Siloso

Mount Imbiah Battery

Fort Serapong

Fort Connaught

Fort Canning

Fullerton

Palmer

Faber Fire Command

Fort Silingsing

Fort Teregah

By the eve of the Japanese invasion , Singapore had become one of the most fortified countries in the world .

===== Battle for Pasir Panjang =====

By 13 February 1942 , the Japanese had already reached Pasir Panjang Ridge (present Kent Ridge Park) after destroying the Allied artillery force on Chwee Chian Hill (where Poh Ern Shih Temple stands today) . This location was near the Alexandra area where the main ammunition stores and a military hospital were situated . The men of the 1st Battalion , Charlie Company , Malay Regiment , led by Lieutenant Adnan Bin Saidi fought bravely to the last . Many Japanese soldiers were killed or wounded . The guns from Labrador assisted the Malay Regiment in their 48 @-@ hour struggle against the Japanese by firing high @-@ explosive shells at enemy troops . However , with Japanese reinforcements , the Malay Regiment were finally surrounded and massacred . Three lucky ones , together with Lieutenant Abbas Abdul @-@ Manan managed to escape and later rejoined 30 surviving soldiers of a British battalion in the nearby area .

After their conquest of Pasir Panjang Ridge , the Japanese proceeded to march towards the city of Singapore for their final decisive thrust against remaining Allied forces there . Perched on a hill (

near present Keppel Country Club) along Pasir Panjang Road , the escaped Malay and British soldiers had gathered together and waited patiently to ambush the Japanese convoy heading towards the city . Using mounted Bofors guns , they let loose deluge of gunshots causing the Japanese to scramble for cover . The Japanese tanks attempted to move forward to engage the enemy but they could not advance due to the sea of dead and wounded bodies blocking its way . About 100 Japanese soldiers were killed during the ambush before the Anglo @-@ Malay force retreated to the city to join their fellow men for their final stand against the Japanese .

= = = Alexandra Hospital massacre = = =

On 14 February 1942 , seeking reprisal for their great loss and also retaliation against retreating soldiers from the 44th Indian Brigade who had fired from Alexandra Hospital , 3 groups of Japanese soldiers went on a blind rampage and entered the hospital from the rear bayoneting everyone they found , regardless of whether they were soldiers , patients and medical staff . They killed a British officer , Lieutenant W.E.J. Weston , who was carrying a white flag to meet them . Even a young patient , Corporal Holden , who was lying on an operating table was not spared . About 200 defenceless souls were massacred . Some managed to escape death by falling to the floor and pretending to be dead .

The following day , Lieutenant @-@ General Renya Mutaguchi , commander of the Japanese 18th Division toured the hospital and distributed tinned fruits , all the while apologising profusely for the brutality of his soldiers and assured the staff of their safety . He also ordered the execution of the Japanese soldiers responsible for the massacre , within the hospital grounds .

= = = Ineffective guns = = =

A common misunderstanding is that the British only anticipated a seaward attack and that the guns of Singapore could only fire out to sea . On the eve of the Japanese attack on Singapore , with the exception of the 15 " guns at the Buona Vista Battery , all large guns in Singapore had 360 @-@ degree traverse . The guns of the Labrador Battery could and did fire inland as they did at advancing Japanese troops in February 1942 .

Nonetheless , the Labrador Battery guns had limited effect during the battle and the rounds allocated to it were more armour @-@ piercing cartridges rather than high explosive rounds which were more effective against the infantry . As a result , these guns were ineffective and saw little action during the Battle of Singapore .

= = Aftermath = =

Before the British surrendered to the Japanese on 15 February 1942 , they destroyed all remaining coastal artillery to prevent any possible usage by the invading Japanese forces . This is known as a scorched @-@ earth policy .

After WWII , there was a worldwide disbandment of British forts as advances in air defence systems caused them to become obsolete . Today , the ruins of coastal fortifications are still visible at Labrador Battery , Mount Faber , Fort Siloso and Fort Canning that serve as a lasting reminder of their wartime legacy in Fortress Singapore .