

= Fort Tigné =

Fort Tigné (Maltese : Il @-@ Forti Tigné or Il @-@ Fortizza ta ' Tigné) is a polygonal fort in Tigné Point , Sliema , Malta . It was built by the Order of Saint John between 1793 and 1795 to protect the entrance to Marsamxett Harbour , and it is one of the oldest polygonal forts in the world . The fort was extensively altered by the British in the 19th century , and it remained in use by the military until 1979 .

Fort Tigné was restored in the early 21st century , and it is now in good condition . It has been on Malta 's tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites since 1998 , as part of the Knights ' Fortifications around the Harbours of Malta .

= = History = =

= = Background and failed proposals = = =

A watch post existed on Punta di Santa Maria (now known as Tigné Point after the fort) in 1417 . The post was probably a small unfortified structure , which was manned by three persons . The peninsula played a significant role during the Great Siege of Malta in 1565 , when the invading Ottomans built a battery on it in order to bombard Fort Saint Elmo . After the siege , the peninsula became known as Dragut Point after the Ottoman corsair Dragut .

The first proposal to build a fortification on Dragut Point was made by the Italian military engineer Antonio Maurizio Valperga in 1670 . He proposed a fortified city known as Borgo della Città Piccola , with a design similar to Fort Ricasoli . The proposal never materialized , probably due to a lack of funds .

In 1715 , Philippe de Vendôme made a second proposal , this time to build a casemated redoubt . A year later , René Jacob de Tigné proposed the construction of a large artillery battery , similar to other coastal batteries that were being built around Malta 's coastline at the time .

In 1757 , Lembi Battery , an outwork of Fort Manoel , was built on the northern shore of the peninsula . A bastioned entrenchment was proposed in the early 1760s , but it was never built .

= = = Construction = = =

The designs for Fort Tigné were eventually made in 1792 , possibly due to the threat of a French invasion . It was commissioned by Grand Master Emmanuel de Rohan @-@ Polduc , and was designed by the newly appointed engineer of the Order , Antoine Étienne de Tousard . Construction began in 1793 under the supervision of capomastro Antonio Cachia , and was completed in July 1795 . The fort was named after the knight and military engineer René Jacob de Tigné , in recognition of his long years of service with the Order . Tigné also paid 1000 scudi for the construction of the new fort , while de Rohan paid about 6000 scudi . Another 500 scudi were donated by the Bali de Tillet , while the rest of the funds were paid by the Fondazione Manoel .

The new fort was quite small by eighteenth century standards , and it was more similar to a large redoubt than a fort . Despite this , its design was considered to be revolutionary , since it was one of the earliest polygonal forts to be built around the world . Fort Tigné was also the last major fortification built by the Order of Saint John .

Upon the completion of Fort Tigné , the nearby Lembi Battery was decommissioned and converted into a private residence .

In around 1797 , a proposal was made to build a fortified city occupying the entire peninsula , with Fort Tigné as its keep . Like the earlier proposals in the late 17th and early 18th centuries , nothing materialized from this plan .

= = = French invasion and occupation = = =

The fort first saw use during the French invasion of Malta in June 1798 . At the time , it was commanded by the Bavarian knight Joseph Maria von Rechberg , and had a garrison made up of men from the Cacciatori , who were a volunteer chasseur light infantry regiment , as well as some bombardiers from the ship San Zaccharia and some Maltese militia . Fort Tigné was armed with 28 guns and 12 mortars as follows , but only 15 of the guns were serviceable :

Twelve 24 @-@ pounder guns

Six 18 @-@ pounder guns

Six 12 @-@ pounder guns

Four 4 @-@ pounder guns

Six shell @-@ firing mortars

Six stone @-@ firing mortars

Fort Tigné was one of the few fortifications that actively tried to resist the invasion . On 10 June , the French attempted to capture it in a minor skirmish , but were successfully repelled . The fort also fired its guns in support of a counterattack by the Order 's navy against the French , and it prevented French ships from entering Marsamxett .

On 11 June , the French bombarded the fort from land and sea . The fort 's garrison fought back , and its commander , Rechberg , managed to bring in more ammunition from Floriana . On 12 June , the bombardment of the fort continued , but by then the French had captured Valletta , Floriana , and Fort Manoel . The Maltese militia left the fort , reducing its garrison to 80 men . By the end of the day , the ammunition had run out , and parts of the fort were damaged during the bombardment . When Rechberg and his soldiers attempted to escape , the French captured them , and the fort was in French hands by 13 June .

During the subsequent Maltese uprising and insurrection against French rule , Maltese insurgents built six batteries facing Fort Tigné , which was held by the French . By 1799 , its armament was reduced to 21 guns , which were as follows :

Seven 24 @-@ pounder guns

Six 18 @-@ pounder guns

Four 10 @-@ pounder guns

Four 4 @-@ pounder guns

= = = British rule = = =

Fort Tigné was officially taken over by the British military in September 1800 , and it became permanently garrisoned in 1805 . The parts damaged during the French occupation were repaired , but no major changes were initially made . In 1815 , after several years of British occupation , the fort was armed with 30 guns :

Fourteen 24 @-@ pounder guns

Twelve 18 @-@ pounder guns

Four 24 @-@ pounder carronades

In the 1860s , the British saw Fort Tigné as the ' perfection of a small fort without flanks ... capable of considerable resistance ' , and it was used as the prototype for other polygonal forts around the world . By then , it was armed mainly with 68 @-@ pounder guns . The parapet on the circular keep was demolished to make way for a single gun mounted on a traversing platform , similar to the ones found on the Martello towers . By 1864 , the fort was armed with eighteen 32 @-@ pounder guns , four 10 @-@ inch guns , and another 32 @-@ pounder on the keep .

The first major modifications were made between 1870 and 1875 , when some of the parapets with embrasures were demolished to make way for emplacements for RML 9 inch 12 ton guns . The remainder of the fort underwent further significant changes over the following years . In the 1880s , the British considered demolishing the fort and replacing it with a larger fortification , but in 1888 it was proposed that instead of demolition , the height of the ramparts should be reduced to the level of the glacis . In the 1890s , gun emplacements for breech @-@ loading (BL) guns were built on the glacis , while further modifications were made when parts of the structure were converted to gun crew accommodation or magazines .

Defence of Tigné Point was further enhanced with the construction of Cambridge Battery between 1878 and 1886 . Garden Battery was then built between 1889 and 1894 , covering the area between Cambridge Battery and Fort Tigné . Barrack blocks were constructed on the rest of the peninsula in the early 20th century .

The fort was included on the Antiquities List of 1925 . It was damaged by aerial bombardment during World War II .

= = = Recent history = = =

When British troops left Malta in 1979 , the fort was abandoned and fell into a state of disrepair . Parts of it were also vandalized . At some point it was also used as a desalination plant .

Since the early 2000s , the Tigné Point peninsula is being redeveloped by MIDI plc . The British barracks were demolished , and high @-@ rise apartments were built instead . In 2008 , MIDI plc also restored the fort as part of the project . The alterations made by the British , such as the BL gun emplacements , were also repaired , while landscaped gardens and walkways were built on the glaxis .

There were a number of proposals on how to use the building , including for catering facilities , as a military museum , an exhibition space or as an art gallery .

= = Layout = =

The design of Fort Tigné was mainly based on the Lunette d 'Arçon , as well as the work of Marc René , marquis de Montalembert . The final design by Antoine Étienne de Tousard resulted in a revolutionary fortification , which made it one of the oldest polygonal forts in the world .

The most noticeable feature of the fort is the circular keep . This was modeled on the réduit de sureté of the Lunette d 'Arçon , and it also bears similarities to the tour @-@ réduits built in Malta in the early 18th century (the only surviving example is Vendôme Tower) . It had two rows of musketry loopholes , and its roof contained a parapet with four embrasures . The latter was replaced with a sloping parapet to mount a single gun in the 1860s . The keep also contains the main gate , above which is a commemorative plaque .

The main body of the fort consisted of a diamond @-@ shaped structure made up of two flanks and two faces . The two faces and the right flank originally had embrasures , but they were dismantled in the late 19th century by the British . A blockhouse , with courtyards on either side , was located in the centre of the fort .

The main structure and the keep were surrounded by a ditch , which had three counterscarp musketry galleries . These were also significantly altered by the British .

The British also built three emplacements for breech @-@ loading (BL) guns on the fort 's glaxis .