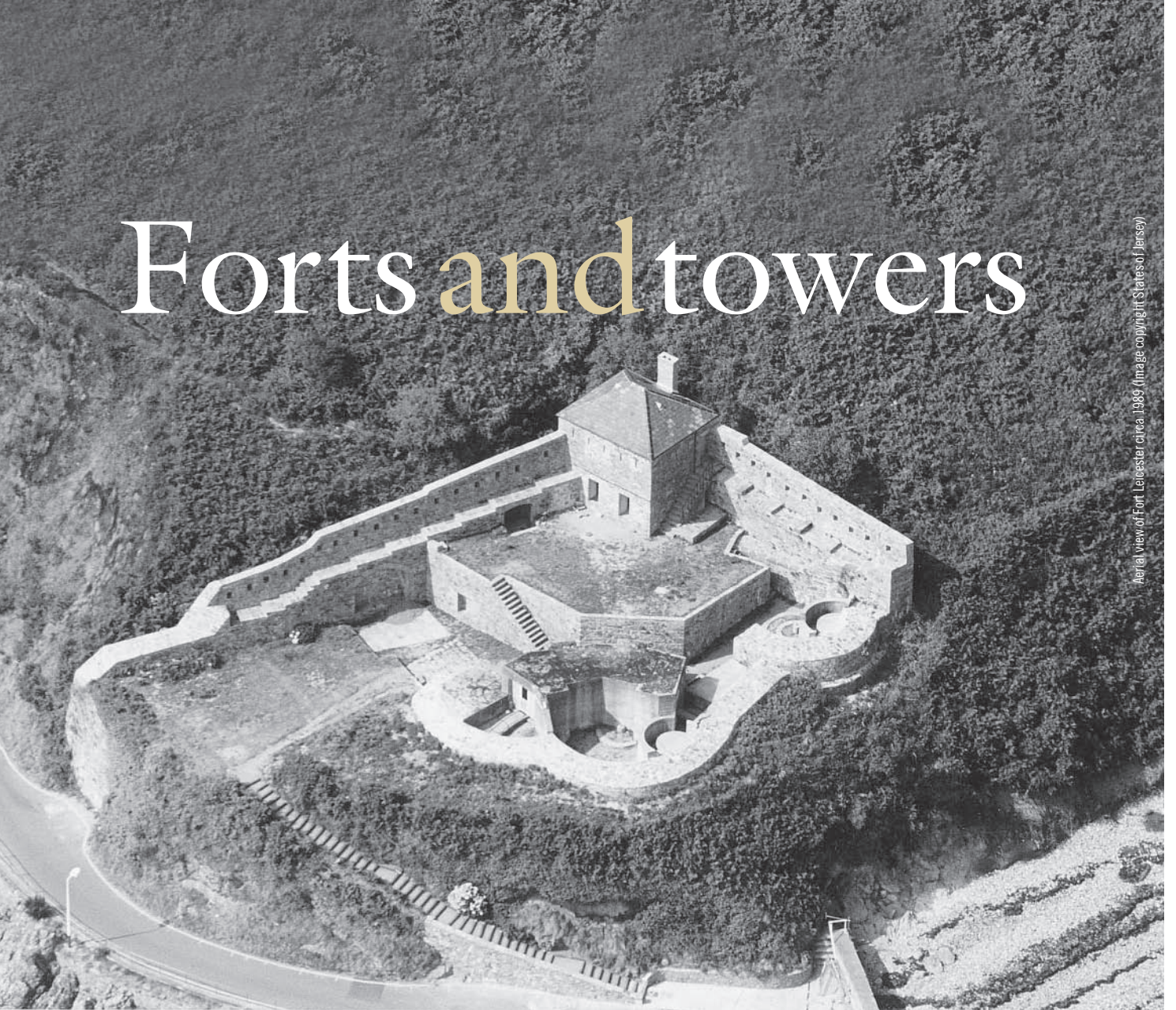


# Forts and towers



Aerial view of Fort Leicester circa 1988 (image copyright Jersey)

**If you have ever waded out or clambered over to one of the Island's stunning coastal fortifications and wondered what is inside, you are not alone. Now, thanks to the Tourism Development Fund, Jersey's forts and towers are to be opened up for public access. Jersey Heritage Trust Director Jonathan Carter and Researcher Mel Warrs present a guided tour.**

THE PROJECT GIVES LIFE TO AN IDEA WHICH had been around for many years. As long ago as 1948, it was being proposed that Fort Leicester, for example, should be used as a summer chalet.

Plans finally got off the ground in 1996, when, due to the initiative of the former Planning Assistant Director of Design and Conservation, Stuart Fell, Environment and Public Services, Jersey Tourism and the Heritage Trust drew up detailed plans for several forts and towers. The project became a reality last year, when, with political support, particularly from former Environment President Senator Philip Ozouf and his successor Transport and Technical Services Minister Deputy Guy de Faye, significant funding

from the Tourism Development Fund and support from the Transport Department, the project could finally get underway.

There are about thirty potential sites, mainly fortifications, along the Island's coast. These buildings are owned by the public and maintained at the taxpayer's expense, but in the past it has not always been easy to ensure public access. There are, for example, significant safety issues to be resolved at some of the sites, but there is now strong agreement that everything should be done to make these important public properties available to members of the public in a variety of ways and to safeguard the future of these distinctive and important buildings.

And with a commitment to opening up these public assets, there is a recognition that they can provide a unique offer to tourists as well as local people, and that income from using them can help to pay for the refurbishment and care of more historic sites. Bookings were launched in November 2005, and with interests for some of the sites stretching into 2011 already, the indications are that the idea works.

The success of the scheme is owed to the way it brings together many of the agencies involved in caring for and promoting Island heritage: Planning and Environment, the Tourism Development Fund, Jersey Tourism, Transport and the Jersey Heritage Trust. The Heritage Trust is charged with managing the refurbishment projects and operating the sites that are administered under agreements with the States. In turn, in developing proposals, the Trust has received help from the Société Jersiaise, the National Trust for Jersey, the Channel Islands Occupation Society and the ecology team at the Environmental Services Department at Howard Davis Farm.

Those organisations have worked with the Trust to produce conservation statements on each building. These aim to assemble what is known about the building, to identify what is special about the character of each one and to set out policies to protect it. The conservation statements have been written by the Heritage Trust's Curator of Historic Buildings, Roger Hills.

The following are extracts from these reports and describe the history of some of the sites it is hoped to make available during 2006: Fort Leicester, Barge Aground, MP2 Radio Tower, L'Etacquerel Fort, La Crête Fort.

For further information on arrangements for access and for booking these sites you can look at our website at [www.jerseyheritagetrust.org](http://www.jerseyheritagetrust.org).

## Fort Leicester

Fort Leicester, built into the hillside above Bouley Bay, has a military history dating to the late 16th century, when a single cannon was put in place and a simple defensive works was named after a favourite of Queen Elizabeth, the Earl of Leicester. The cannon appeared nearly half a century after an invasion attempt on Jersey from France, and the States decided then that its repair and upkeep should be the joint responsibility of the Constables of Trinity, St Martin, St John and Grouville.

Another half a century later, in 1646, the Seigneur of Trinity, Amice Carteret, was asked to erect a boulevard (rampart) and a battery platform, but after a few years it was reported that not only was the cannon no longer in good condition, it also lacked ammunition. After more hostilities with France, in 1690, the four Constables were again pressed to keep the gun 'in a good state'.

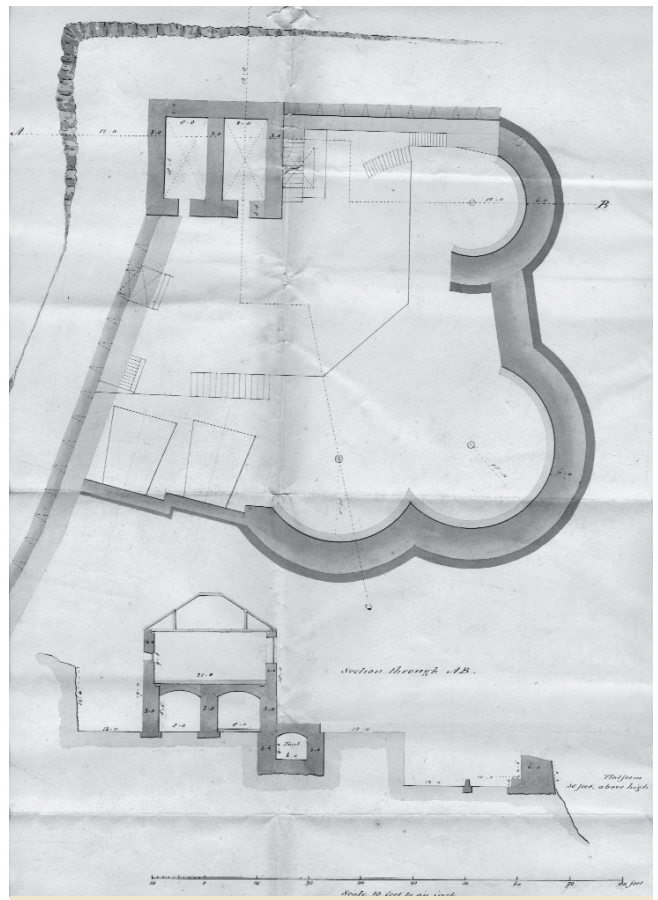
In 1739, though, the Island's Lieutenant Governor, Capt John Charlton, reported that the Bouley Bay rampart



Bouley Bay area from the map engraved by S Neele from a survey carried out to illustrate William Plee's Account of Jersey, 1817

was inadequate for the bay's defence, and within ten years the battery became a fort.

A map from the year of the Battle of Jersey (1781) shows defensive positions up the bay's hillside and a guardhouse to the south of the battery. The Duke of Richmond's map (for which surveying began in 1787) reveals lines of defences around Bouley Bay, with the Fort Leicester site containing a



19th-century plan of Fort Leicester drawn by J Oldfield (Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise)



Fort Leicester at Bouley Bay, circa 190  
(Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive)



Fort Leicester - the refurbished interior, 2006

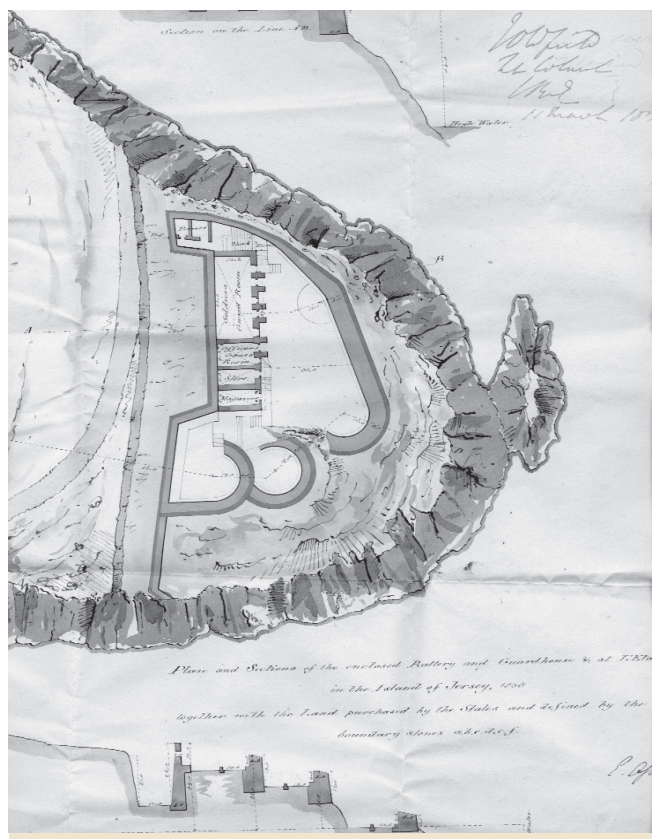


Fort Leicester - view of the courtyard, 2006

continuous seaward wall and a landward one to the rear. A guardhouse to the south is also shown.

A survey from 1804 listed Bouley Bay's armoury as two 24-pound guns on the east flank, two of similar size facing the bay, and three 24-pounders and two 12-pounders on the west side. Four other guns were positioned on the east and west, and it was also recorded that a company of soldiers were permanently in the barracks.

In the 1830s, as a spate of fort building took place on the north coast, Fort Leicester was developed to house five heavy cannon, possibly 30-pounders, positioned to prevent enemy landings and to control the western side of the bay (L'Etacquerel Fort controlled the east).



19th-century plan of La L'Etacquerel Fort drawn by J Oldfield (Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise)

The fort would have been occupied by the Militia, and probably needed 30 men and one officer to man the guns.

By 1836, when steam navigation was seen to present a serious threat of invasion and was putting Jersey in a 'critical' situation, according to one military figure of the time, Fort Leicester was rebuilt. The development provided three large traversing gun platforms for its five guns, and a guardhouse. The present fort is substantially unaltered from 1836.

Although a century later a 1935 Ordnance Survey Map of the Island showed a disused site, just a few years were to pass before it resumed its military role – in the hands of an enemy. Occupying German forces installed searchlight housing and reinforced concrete gun emplacements within the old traversing platforms.

Meanwhile, those who continue to enjoy the fort include some of Jersey's wall lizards, with a higher population at the fort than anywhere else in the Island, except Mont Orgueil.

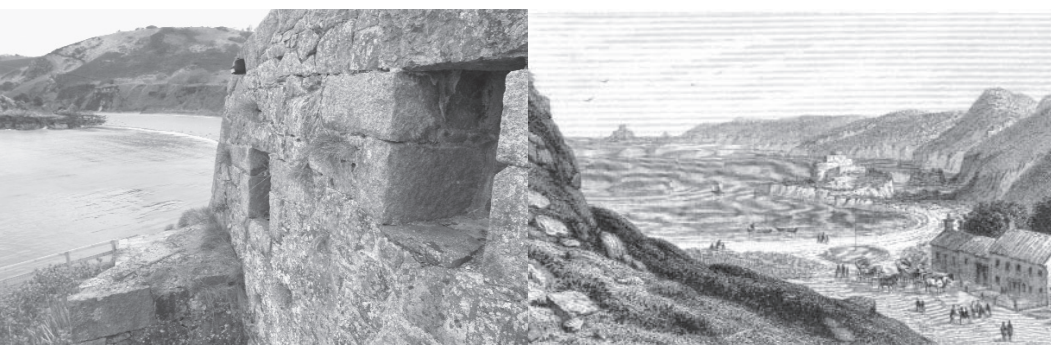
## L'Etacquerel Fort

While Fort Leicester was intended to defend the western side of Bouley Bay in case of French invaders in the 1830s, L'Etacquerel Fort guarded the eastern flank.

In 1739, Jersey's Lieutenant-Governor, Capt John Charlton, had reported that an early boulevard, or rampart, constructed at Bouley Bay was 'more than useless' for defence, and he had pinpointed a spot called *L'Escarcée* that would better fit the bill.

The States of Jersey agreed, but nothing happened until 1742, when tenders were sought. It was agreed that the *dougres* (authority to commandeer work from parishioners to do government jobs) should be used to construct a path to the boulevard. A tender of £500 gave the job to Elie Dumaresq and Aaron Gavey, with work to be finished by midsummer the next year.

The wall inside the boulevard was to be a *contre-banque* (earthwork), three feet above the foundations, four feet wide and 85 feet long, and sloping towards La Côte du Nord. Adjoining platforms, more than 100 feet high, should be of free stone, at least one foot square and six inches, and cemented with lime and sand.



Aspect showing the magnificent view from Fort Leicester, 2006

Bouley Bay, Jersey – print, with L'Etacquerel Fort in the centre



Aerial view of L'Etacquerel Fort, circa 1989 (Image copyright States of Jersey)

Six cannon were transported from Elizabeth Castle in 1746 for use at the new rampart, but in 1759 the Commander-in-Chief of the Forces advised Jersey that the structure was ‘valueless’ because the parapet was not high enough, so the States decreed that it be raised with turf. In 1778 directions were given to build a powder magazine.

The authoritative Duke of Richmond Map, surveyed in 1787 and published in 1795, shows a gun platform located higher up the slope and further inland than at the present site.

According to the respected historian, Philip Ahier, writing in 1956, the absence of references in Actes of the States to the defence of Bouley Bay could mean *L'Etacquerel Battery* was not established until between 1786 and 1790. It seems it was not mentioned in that form until November 1807, when it was decided that a powder magazine should be built nearby.

Ahier adds that in a survey of batteries three years earlier, made by Major Le Coureur, Bouley Bay was shown as being defended on the east (by L'Etacquerel) with two 24-pound guns, 150 feet above the high-water mark.

Records show typically various spellings for the bay fortification – a 1787 Army Engineer's Report refers to platforms for two 24-pounders at *Le Tacquerel* and an extract from a North West Regiment Orderly Book 25 years later mentions *Letacrel*.

By the late 1820s a new French threat seemed to appear. That country's political state was again volatile and the increasing use of steam navigation for military pursuits was viewed with trepidation.

As defensive works resumed on Jersey's north coast, Fort Leicester was rebuilt to include a guardhouse and three large traversing gun platforms, and a similar platform was added at L'Etacquerel.

A War Office reference in 1840 shows that the granite-walled fort, with its single-storey guardhouse, was in good order, and, although it was exposed to high ground at the rear, an enclosing loopholed wall and a ditch protected it.

Its platforms housed four heavy guns, there was a magazine for 90 barrels of gunpowder, and a garrison of one officer and 40 men could be accommodated. Four 32-pound guns were recorded as being on site in 1848.

As the perceived French threat gradually receded, the British government eventually abandoned fortifications like L'Etacquerel, leaving them in the hands of the States. Ordnance Survey maps of 1935, 1981 and 2003 show a disused site, although the States carried out £90,000 of repairs in the early 1990s.

Down the decades L'Etacquerel has been largely unaltered, retaining its authenticity and completeness as an 1830s fort that was strategically sited and represented a stage in the evolution of military defence.

Like its neighbour Fort Leicester, L'Etacquerel has provided a haven for wall lizards, and during the more recent years of its disused state has been a popular location for unofficial parties and ‘raves’.

### Corbière Radio Tower (MP2)

Built with the forced labour of the Second World War occupying force's Organisation Todt, Corbière Radio Tower has throughout its history been an ‘observation’ post, first as part of the Hitler's Atlantic Wall against the Allies, and then in peacetime with a communication role for the States of Jersey.

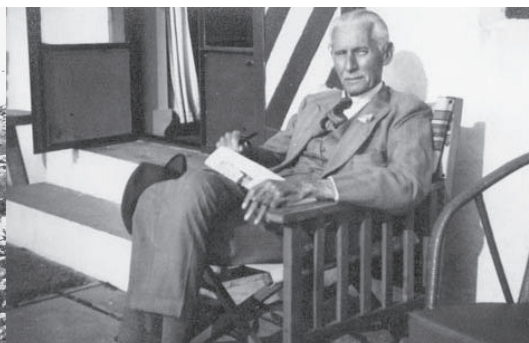
The German occupiers were instructed by their high command to make the Channel Islands unassailable, and artillery batteries needed an effective method of fire control and a system of naval-direction and range-finding towers. They were known as *Marinpeilständen und Me stellen*, and the five-floor one at Corbière was the



The reinforced concrete German coastal artillery tower at La Corbière was originally camouflaged to resemble an 18th-century Jersey granite round tower (Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive)



Barge Aground (unknown date)



Lionel Cox, circa 1948, seated outside the building he commissioned (Courtesy of Miss M Cabot)



Barge Aground, painted in camouflage colours during the Occupation (Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive)

second of three (hence MP2). They were unique to Jersey, not being found anywhere else in the Atlantic Wall.

The reinforced concrete building was originally camouflaged to resemble an 18th-century Jersey granite round tower, and located at the top was a small cabin with radio direction-finding equipment that enabled German shipping to find its bearings. It was adapted for use by the States' Harbours and Airport Committee in 1976, with a glass-panelled control room being added so that a duty officer could monitor the radio communications of all vessels using the English Channel.

Each of the five floors of the 17.8-metre-high tower has a wide observation slot on the seaward side, and most are bricked up. There are three defensive embrasures on the landward side. Surviving wartime features are a concrete staircase and a steel door for the ground-floor store, while additions since then include a control room fire-escape ladder, a blockwork garage and a new eastern entrance link. (Also to the east is a buried personnel shelter of reinforced concrete, one of only three in Jersey and now blocked up.)

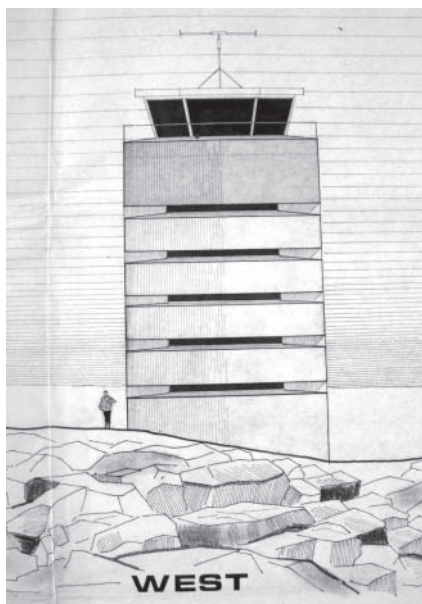
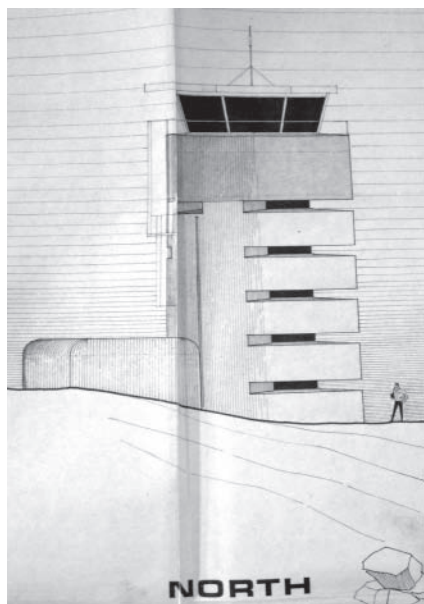
Among the features that have been lost are the rooftop radio direction-finding equipment, interior fittings and the external camouflage scheme.

The tower's historic significance is that it is one of the most prominent and impressive buildings in the German fortification network, as well as being part of Hitler's Atlantic Wall. Architecturally, it is close to its original form and physical context, and is considered to reflect the movement that evolved in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s.

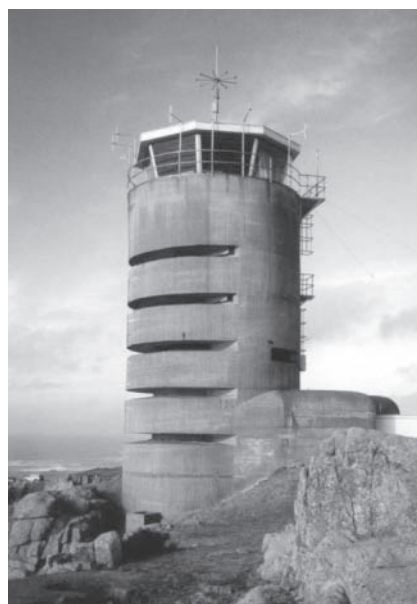
### Barge Aground

Barge Aground, in St Ouen's Bay, has fulfilled diverse roles since being built 71 years ago by George Lionel Cox.

The single-storey, boat-shaped building started life as a beach chalet (one of many in the dunes west of the Five Mile Road between the wars), was requisitioned during the Occupation and used as a German canteen, became a clinic for people from around the world with speech disorders, and in later years was the camping site for local and visiting Scouts.



North and west elevations of the proposed Jersey Radio Station at La Corbière



B34 Naval coastal artillery observation tower MP2, circa 1989 (Image copyright States of Jersey)



View from the sea of the refurbished Barge Aground, 2006



Bonne Nuit Bay, Jersey – print by Philip Oules (1817-1885)



Pathway to La Crête Fort, 1895  
(Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise Photographic Archive)

Mr Cox bought the site in three transactions: the land in the middle was acquired in 1926 from Leonard Snell, that to the north from John Davies in 1934, and that to the south from Angèle Rault in the same year. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1935 (surveyed the year before) shows the site without any buildings.

The structure (also known as ‘Seagull’) was commissioned in about 1935, and although its designer is unknown, Mark Amy Ltd did the construction. Mr Cox, a world traveller, acquired numerous antiques and curios while abroad, many of which he used as furnishings for his new chalet.

He returned to England just before the Occupation, when the building was taken over by enemy forces and during which, it is claimed, items from inside were shipped to Germany. Mr Cox returned after the war and restored his little haven, leaving it in his will ten years later to the Scout Association.

For a number of years, until 1971, it was leased to William Chalmers Kerr, a research psychologist from Glasgow University who specialised in speech disorders, before it became the focus for Scouting in Jersey.

It was mainly used as extra sleeping accommodation when the Island hosted large summer camps, and was visited by the Chief Scout, Sir William Gladstone, in 1978. It eventually became the Scouts Association headquarters in 1981. The site was also the venue for summer fundraising concerts held by the Scout Fellowship in the 1980s and early 1990s.

The Scouts sold the site to the public of the Island in 1997, but still used it until 2001. A planning application to demolish the boundary walls and sheds and form natural banks was approved in 2004.

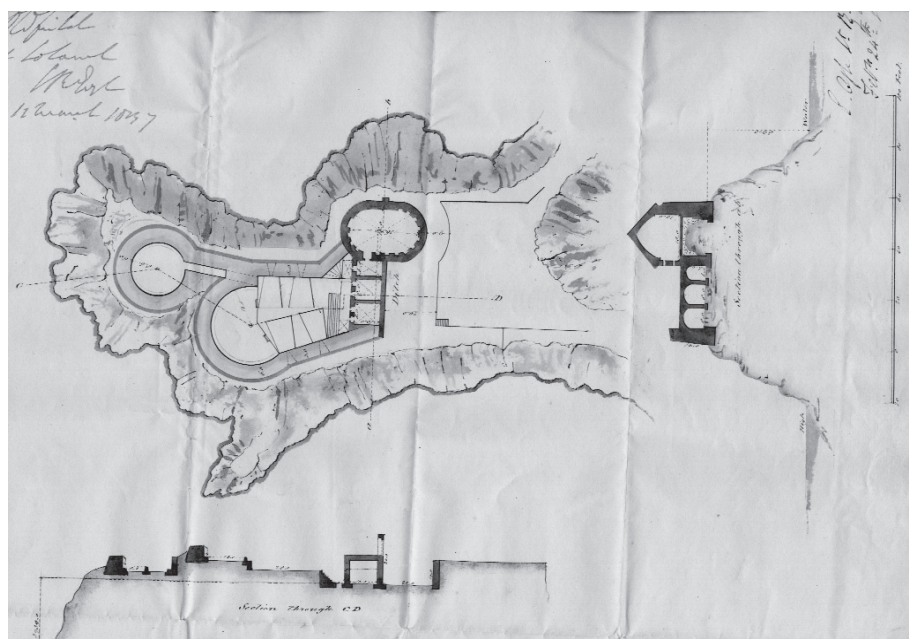
Most of the original landscaped garden was bulldozed by the Scouts Association in order to form a flat area, and only what was left is regarded as archaeologically significant. However, the site is within the protected area, Les Mielles, many parts of which preserve a prehistoric landscape beneath the sands.

Historically, the building is the last remaining example of the bay’s beach chalets, which were emblematic of the interwar fashion for building sites for rest and relaxation (both Plémont and Portelet holiday villages opened in this period).

Architecturally, the design is considered playful and quirky, reflecting the modernist style that came to Jersey in the 1930s.

## La Crête Fort

La Crête Fort is a military construction of the 1830s that evolved from a 16th-century rampart, went on to be a point of resistance for wartime German occupiers, and ended up



19th-century plan of La Crête Fort drawn by J Oldfield (Courtesy of the Société Jersiaise)

being a holiday home for the Island's Lieutenant-Governors.

Built on a northern headland between Bonne Nuit and Giffard bays, the fort is located in an area where the 1563 Popinjay Map of Jersey pinpointed a boulevard (rampart).

In 1778 (three years before the Battle of Jersey), the Royal Jersey Militia recommended a battery of two guns at La Crête, and a map in 1781 shows the battery position. Six years later, the battery was said by an Army Engineer's Report to have two 24-pound guns on wooden platforms, and the Duke of Richmond Map published in 1795 shows the upper and lower battery and a guardhouse.

A survey in 1810 stated that La Crête was due to have a magazine some time that year, and a North West Regiment orderly book covering 1812 to 1817 refers to a battery with two 18-pounders.

In his 1993 work about the building of La Crête Fort (*A Respectable Little Work*), Martin Brice says that the States fortified the site in 1813, and that after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1815 La Crête kept its 18-pounders.

According to Martin Brice, the States completed the fort in 1834, at a cost of £971, the work being done by a contractor called Slater, and provided accommodation for one officer and 40 other ranks from the Jersey Militia. A water tank holding 540 gallons and a magazine for 40 barrels of gunpowder were included.

Minor repairs were carried out three years later after the Lieutenant-Governor requested a report, and although the fort was said to be in good order, its intended armoury of six cannon had still not arrived by 1840, according to Brice. When they did, two would be sited on traversing platforms

and four would fire through embrasures. By 1848, six 32-pounders were believed to be at the fort.

La Crête lost its military importance a few years later and was abandoned, but less than a century later German Occupation forces revived its intended role as a bar to invaders. They armed it with an anti-tank gun, heavy and light machine guns, a mortar and a searchlight, turning the fort into 'Resistance Point La Crête', Brice records. Some of the original battery layouts survived, though.

One of the fort's original disadvantages had been vulnerability to fire from high ground at the rear, although a dry ditch did separate the single-storey, three-roomed guardhouse from the slopes.

A bridge would originally have been used to cross the ditch, long ago filled by a series of 20th-century rooms, which, until this year, were at the disposal of the Island's Lieutenant-Governors as a holiday retreat.

Like other forts and towers, La Crête is felt to have retained its authenticity and historical context, and be evidence of how defensive theory developed in a changing military environment.

The forts and towers group of the Société Jersiaise regard it as 'an icon of the Island's strong sense of individuality and self-determination, demonstrated by the ancient requirement to bear arms in the Island's defence'.

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The Duke of Richmond map published in 1795 shows the upper and lower battery and a guardhouse at La Crête, between Bonne Nuit and Giffard bays