



# Love your Castle

## ELIZABETH CASTLE AND THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

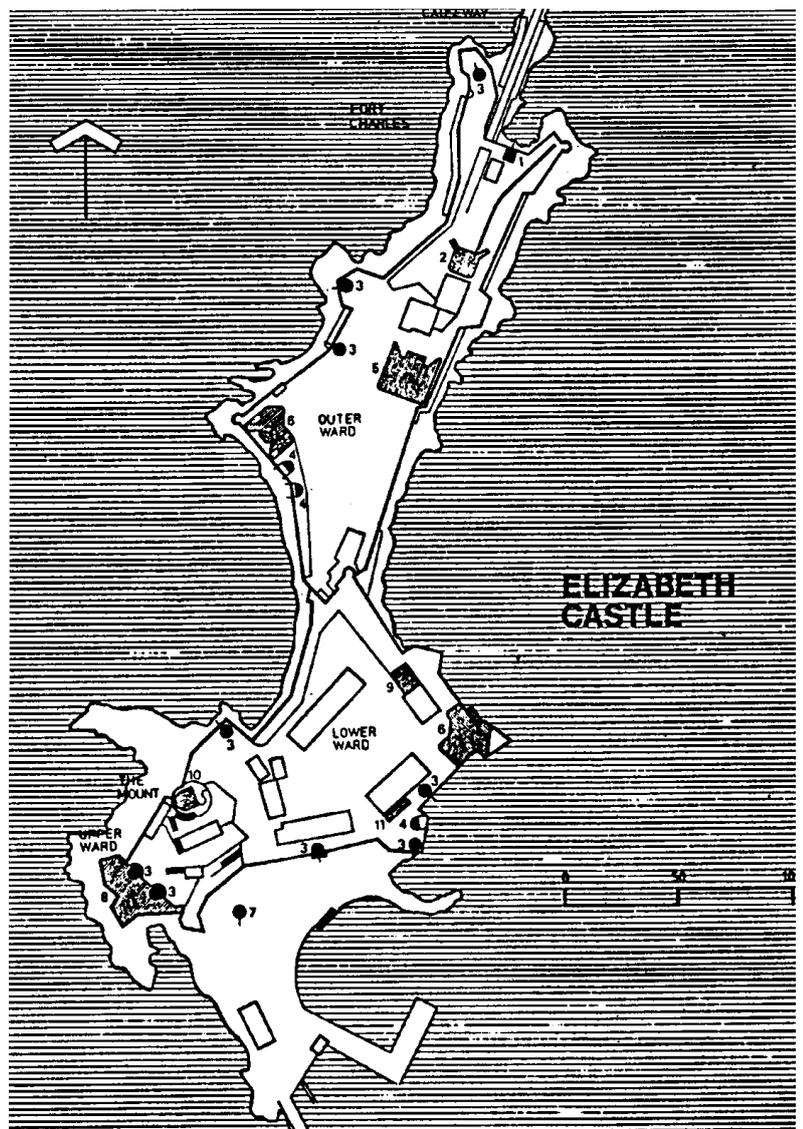
During the Occupation Elizabeth Castle was one of the strongpoints in St Aubin's Bay commanding the sea approaches to St Helier. Between 1942 and 1944 Russian and other forced labourers were employed creating gun emplacements and bomb proof shelters here. The Castle was divided into a northern sector and a southern sectors which were manned by an infantry unit with support from Luftwaffe personnel who manned the anti-aircraft guns. German records give the garrison as three NCOs and 34 men although at times the garrison could be up to 100. They were housed in the Officers' Quarters and the Governor's House and their kitchen was in the Ordnance Store in the Lower Ward.

The Castle was also used as a punishment camp by the Todt organization for the forced workers, especially the Russians who tried to escape from the other camps because it was easier to patrol.

In general German fortifications could be divided up into three standards:

Field type fortifications were made by individual troops and were usually trenches and fox holes; Reinforced field type fortifications made by specialist Construction Battalions and were made from wood and steel covered with earth or concrete up to one metre thick; and Fortress standard fortifications built by the Todt organisation which had walls and ceilings made from reinforced concrete two metres thick.

As you go around the site you will see many reminders of the last phase of Elizabeth Castle military past.



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## THE OUTER WARD

1. In 1944 a Czech-made 47mm anti-tank gun was sited here in a light timber lean-to which commanded the approach to the Castle over the causeway. The lean-to was removed in 1946.

2. Searchlight bunker with crew rooms. The 900mm floodlight was kept in the bunker and pushed up the end of the rail track from where it could light up the Harbour mouth. The bunker is fortress standard and could withstand a direct hit by a bomb. This is inaccessible today as it now serves as a magazine to store the Castles supply of black powder used for firing the midday canon.

3. When the Castle was being re-fortified the sides of the Second Gateway were cut back about 150mm on each side to allow the lorries to pass through. Why they did this rather than demolish it we will never know.

4. Machine gun position on Fort Charles.

5. Machine gun position on West Bastion.

6. Machine gun position on West Curtain wall.

7. The Personnel bunker on the green has twin entrances and two rooms, one for the crew and one for stores. This is another of the fortress standard bunkers and has reinforced concrete walls and roof which are 2 metres thick.

8. The 105mm coastal casemate still has its main armament in position - the 1913 Schneider which was captured from the French in the early days of the War and brought to Jersey. With its range of about ten kilometres this gun would be capable of hitting Corbière lighthouse. Bunkers such as this were made gas-tight and were equipped with ventilation pumps and extractor fans to pump out cordite fumes in the gun rooms. Food and bottled Vichy water were stored in special compartments. The soldiers in this bunker could survive for up to two months if it were sealed. The casemate replaced an earlier open gun position immediately to the south of it, which was later used for a searchlight position.

## THE LOWER WARD

9. The 18th century cells set into the curtain wall next to the Canteen building in Parade ground were enlarged and converted into personnel shelters.

10. The second of the Castle's 105mm coastal casemate also has its main armament, a 1913 Schneider, in position and above it can be seen the ranging marks with drawings of recognition features - the gun crew could not see what they were firing at but they could get an idea by looking at the range card they had painted above the gun embrasure. The gunner received instructions by telephone from the Fire Control Tower which was built at the top of the Castle. In order to build this bunker the eastern end of the Canteen was demolished and the upper part of the Royal Bastion was cut away and the masonry thrown onto the beach below. It also blocked off the Great Sally Port where the garrison boat used to land.

11. The gateway leading into Laniers Magazine yard was demolished and the machine gun position set in the angle beneath the terraced breastwork.

12. Machine gun position behind Officers Quarters.

13. The two light air raid shelters outside rear door of Officer's Quarters were provided for the crews of the nearby anti-tank gun which would have fired back towards the harbour and a machine gun on the Green Bastion which was set into an adapted British mounting. The parapet cut down by the Germans was replaced in the 1990s as a safety measure.

14. Machine gun position on curtain wall overlooking harbour.

15. Just beneath the eastern curtain wall overlooking the small harbour and breakwater is a Renault tank turret set on a toothed ring over a Tobruk pit which would give the gunners some protection.

## THE UPPER WARD

16. On a platform at the southern end of Raleigh's Yard was a search light position. This searchlight served Batterie Endrass at Westmount. The site was originally built for a heavy machine gun but when the tank turret was positioned at the base of the wall below it became redundant and replaced by a searchlight. In 1946 30 German PoWs removed the upper part of the concrete structure for the searchlight.

17. At the head of the stairs leading into the Upper Ward the barbette emplacements of 1900 were adapted to take 20mm anti-aircraft guns (Flak 38) manned by IV Zug. The third gun was on the summit of the Castle.

18. The Governor's House was converted into a barracks partitioned into a number of bedrooms, mess rooms and lecture rooms.

19. The most distinctive of the German additions to the Castle is the large round Observation and Fire Control Tower built on the highest point. From this vantage point the commanding officer controlled the fire from the various gun positions around the Castle. On the top was the third 20mm anti-aircraft gun. These had a range of 4.8 kilometres over the ground or 2,100 metres when fired straight in the air.

20. The Captain's House below the Mount housed the communications centre.

## BEYOND THE WALLS

21. The massive concrete bunker at the base of the Hermitage Rock was built to house an anti-tank gun and machine gun and also held the control panel for the electrically detonated minefield which protected the Inner Roads and the entrance to the harbour. This was one of a pair - the other was on the other side of the Inner Roads at La Collette.

After the War, 30 skilled German prisoners of war were retained to carry out a programme of clearance, repairs and restoration of the Castle.