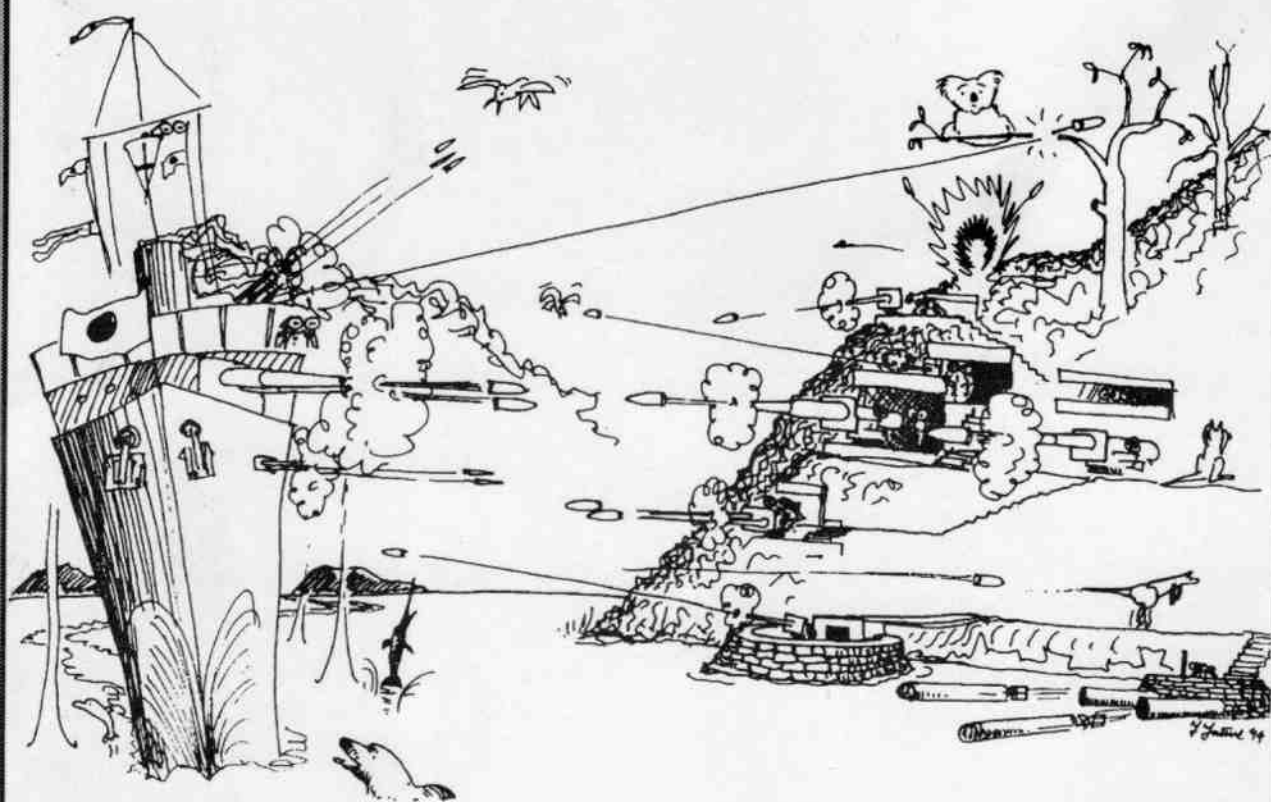


The GUNS of TOMAREE



Michael Smith

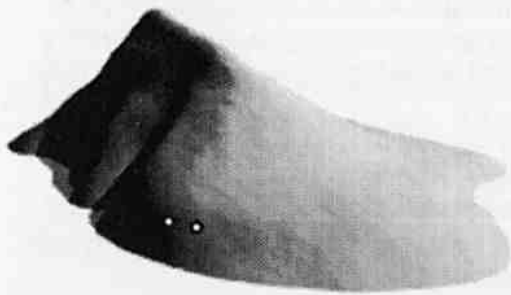
Graeme Steinbeck

THE GUNS OF TOMAREE

As many as 100,000 people a year climb to the top of Tomaree Headland. On the walk you will see evidence of earlier constructions, part of Australia's wartime defences. This book will help you make sense of the block houses, concrete slabs, machinery and chunks of camouflage you may come across.

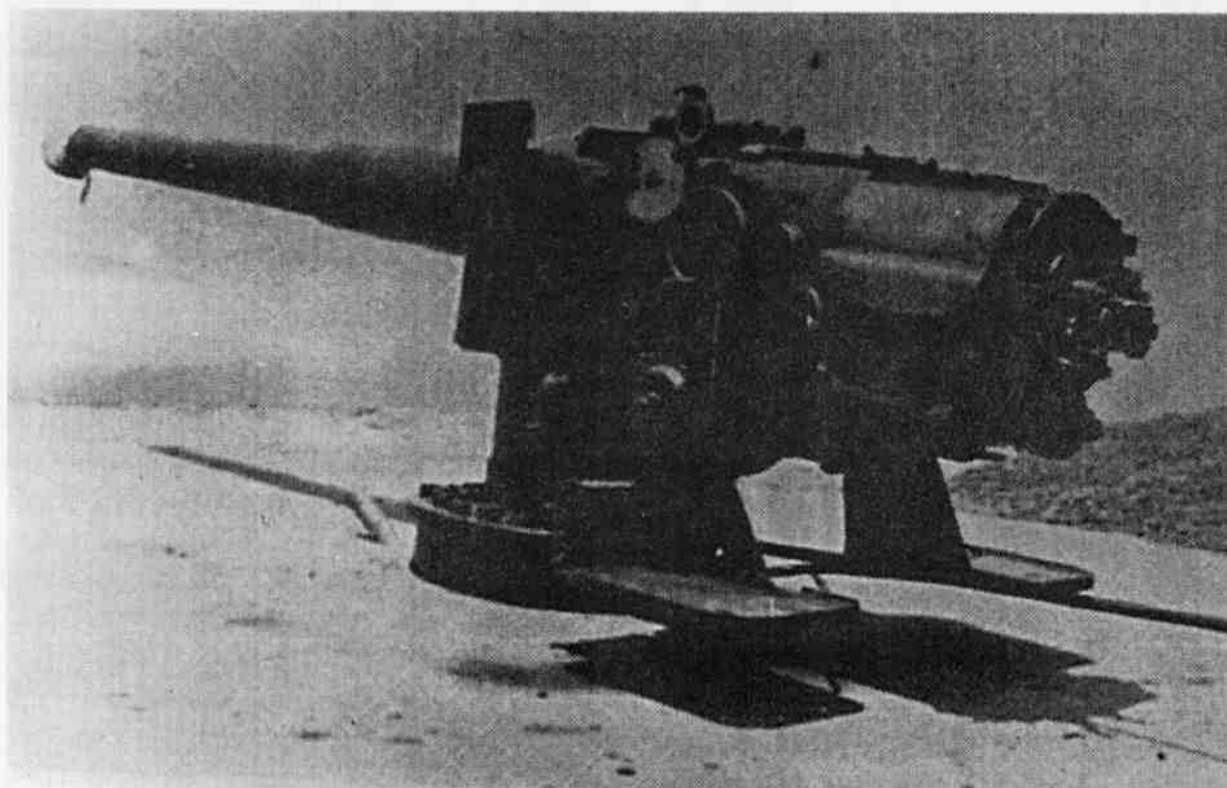
36 pages
19 photographs
7 maps





The GUNS of TOMAREE

Compiled by Michael Smith
and Graeme Steinbeck



One of the two 6 inch (152mm) guns
on Tomaree Head during World War 2.

6" (152mm) Coast gun.

Muzzle velocity, 773 metres per second.

Maximum range 14 km.

Weight of gun and breech mechanism, 7.5 ton.

Total length, 7.09 metres.

Elevation -10°, +16° with shield, +20° without.

Ammunition. Separate loading, bag charge, silk cloth bag containing 10 kg of cordite.

Shell. Piercing shell weighing 46.2kg for attacking ships. Capable of perforating 150mm of Krupp cemented plate at 3km.

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In the early 1940s Port Stephens was a large natural harbour close to the vulnerable, yet essential steelworks of Newcastle. Australia was at war with Japan. An unguarded Port Stephens could have provided an easy landing place for any hostile force.

The guns at Newcastle were too far away to provide protection for Port Stephens.

By the end of 1942 Fort Tomaree was constructed and ready, with two "six inch" (152mm) guns, torpedo tubes, mortars, machine guns, rifle pits, search lights, command posts, observation posts, barbed wire entanglements and accommodation.

The guns were never fired in anger. Their installation did however provide peace of mind and the facilities for artillery training.

Nearby, at Nelson Bay, the Joint Overseas Operating Training School (JOOTS) was being set up to handle courses for officers and men of the U.S. and Australian Armed Forces. The bays and beaches of Port Stephens provided training for 2000 Australian and 20,000 U.S. ship-to-shore invasion specialists.

The base for JOOTS was H.M.A.S. Assault. Here the three armed services

co-operated in their efforts to recapture territory lost to the Japanese.

With the war moving closer to Japan, the Amphibious Training Centre was closed on October 12th 1943, after only a year of operation.

From then until the end of hostilities on the 15th of August 1945, the military facilities around Port Stephens played only a minor role in supply and training. Gan Gan Army Camp, 4km from Nelson Bay was a troop staging and training area. The buildings there consisted of kitchens, mess, toilets and ablution blocks. The troops lived in tents.

The guns of Tomaree have gone. What remains are gun emplacements, observation and command posts, and the foundations of many of the structures.

Some of the buildings were taken over by Tomaree Lodge and still stand today. Tomaree Lodge is owned by the State Government. The eastern three quarters of Tomaree Headland is part of Tomaree National Park.

What follows are excerpts from the official records which have been edited slightly to correct spelling mistakes and to convert imperial measurements to metric.

*Notes on a Deputation
which waited on the Prime
Minister, at Parliament House,
Canberra on Tuesday, 11th
December, 1940.*

"Mr. Abbot said that he and other members of the deputation were concerned about the defences of the Port Stephens district. This district is the centre of a large industrial area and he considered it vital that adequate fortifications should be provided to protect it. At present the only fortifications in that vicinity are those at Stockton and the range of these guns is not sufficiently great to protect the Port Stephens area.

Members of the deputation felt that at present, owing to the lack of adequate defences, enemy ships could pass through the entrance to Port Stephens and proceed a considerable distance up the river."



Gun emplacements under construction on Tomaree Head about 1941. Timber formwork is being positioned prior to pouring concrete.

*Extract from a letter to Prime Minister Menzies
from the House of Representatives, Canberra
dated 8th November, 1940.*

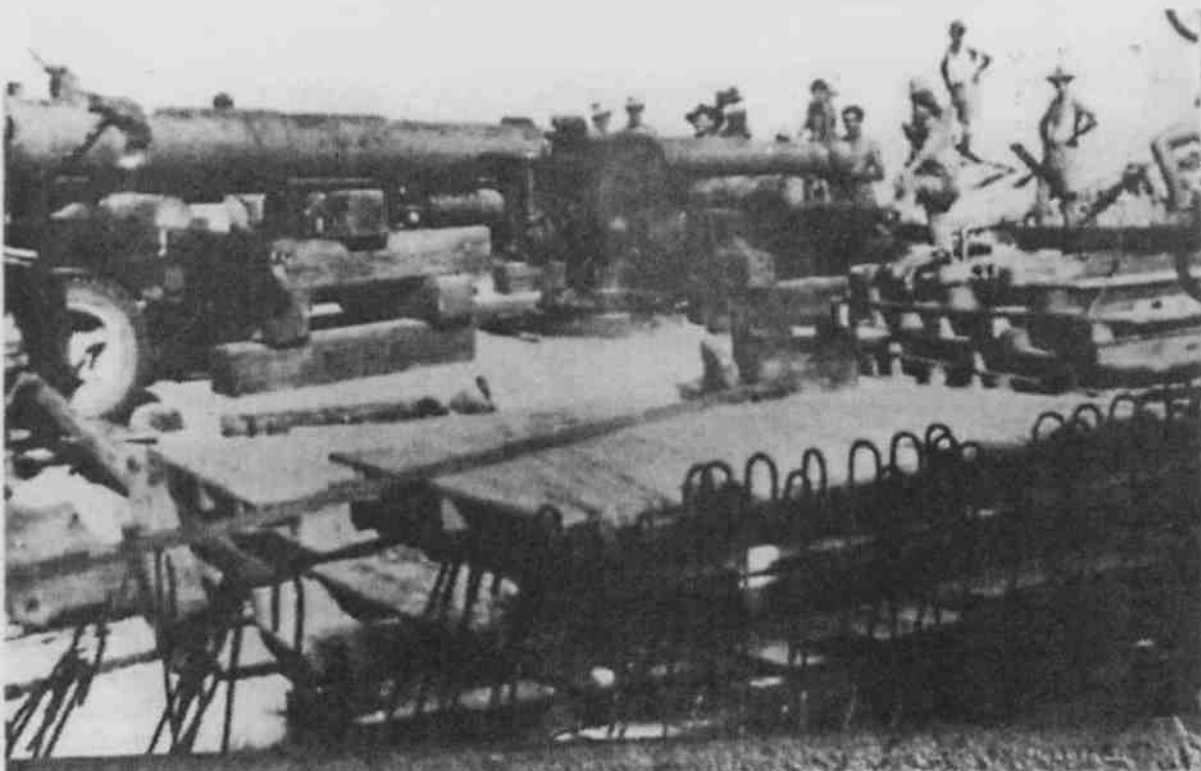
"The then Minister for the Navy, presumably as a considered reply, said that he would not like to attempt to take a ship into Port Stephens as the batteries at Stockton would make the entrance untenable. I find on measuring up the various positions on the map that the distance of these guns from the entrance exceeds the range of the weapons by some 6km.

As you know the munitions and war effort of the Commonwealth largely depends upon the heavy industries situated round the shore of Port Hunter. In addition at Williamstown, some 16km to the north of Newcastle, the Commonwealth has recently built a very large aerodrome. I am aware of the fact that it is for training purposes but nevertheless it is the only aerodrome in the Newcastle District capable of landing machines of the Douglas and Lockheed type. As was demonstrated recently when the party of American journalists visited that city in a Douglas plane. As well there is situated adjacent to it the auxiliary supply of the Hunter River Water Board. From the sand beds here, I understand, the Board proposes to draw 63,000,000 litres of water per day, an amount equal to the Chichester supply, and essential for the industries located at Port Hunter. While at Hexham the supply pipe from Chichester is above ground and could easily be destroyed with a few charges of gun cotton. The whole of this most important area is very vulnerable to any mechanised raiding force landed in Port Stephens. And yet there is nothing to prevent them so landing and nothing to hinder them for many hours in any advance which they might make to destroy the B.H.P. and other works as well as the Aerodrome and waterworks."

*Part of a Memorandum for the
Secretary, Department of the
Navy. From F.R. Sinclair.*

" Site for 6-in (152mm) Battery.

It is agreed that a site on Yacaaba Head would give a better arc of fire leaving no dead water except behind the outlying islands, but the primary role of the battery being the prevention of troopships entering Port Stephens this task can be carried out more effectively from Tomaree. Furthermore the location of the main artillery Defences on Yacaaba Head would involve a corresponding increase in responsibility in local protection and an undesirable dispersal of forces. For these reasons Tomaree site was selected but if it is necessary at a later date to establish an O.P. on Yacaaba Head to give observation over areas obscured from Tomaree any small protective detachment will be provided from the Newcastle Covering Force whose commander has already received instructions to this effect."



The guns of Tomaree waiting to be housed

Part of a letter from the Secretary, Military Board, Melbourne, dated 9th October 1941, concerning the defences of Port Stephens, specifically the proposed installation of torpedo tubes.

" ... the following conditions must be specified to give reasonable chances of success.

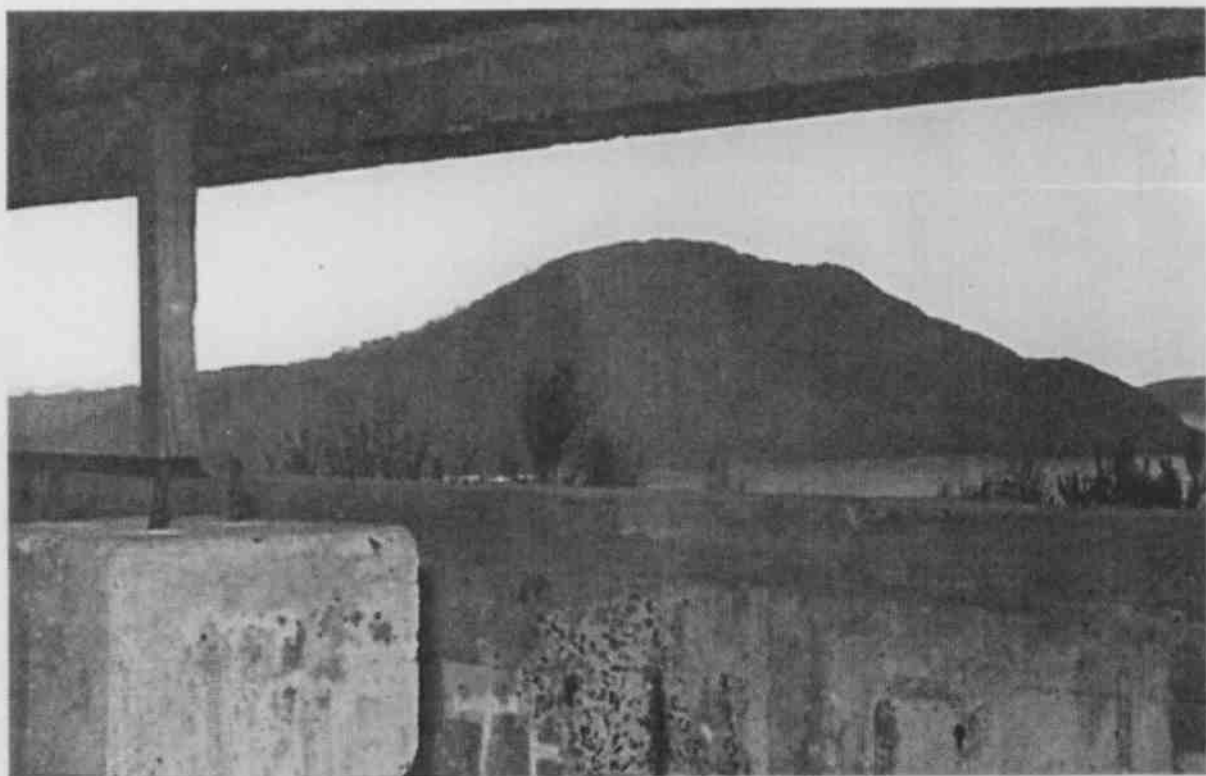
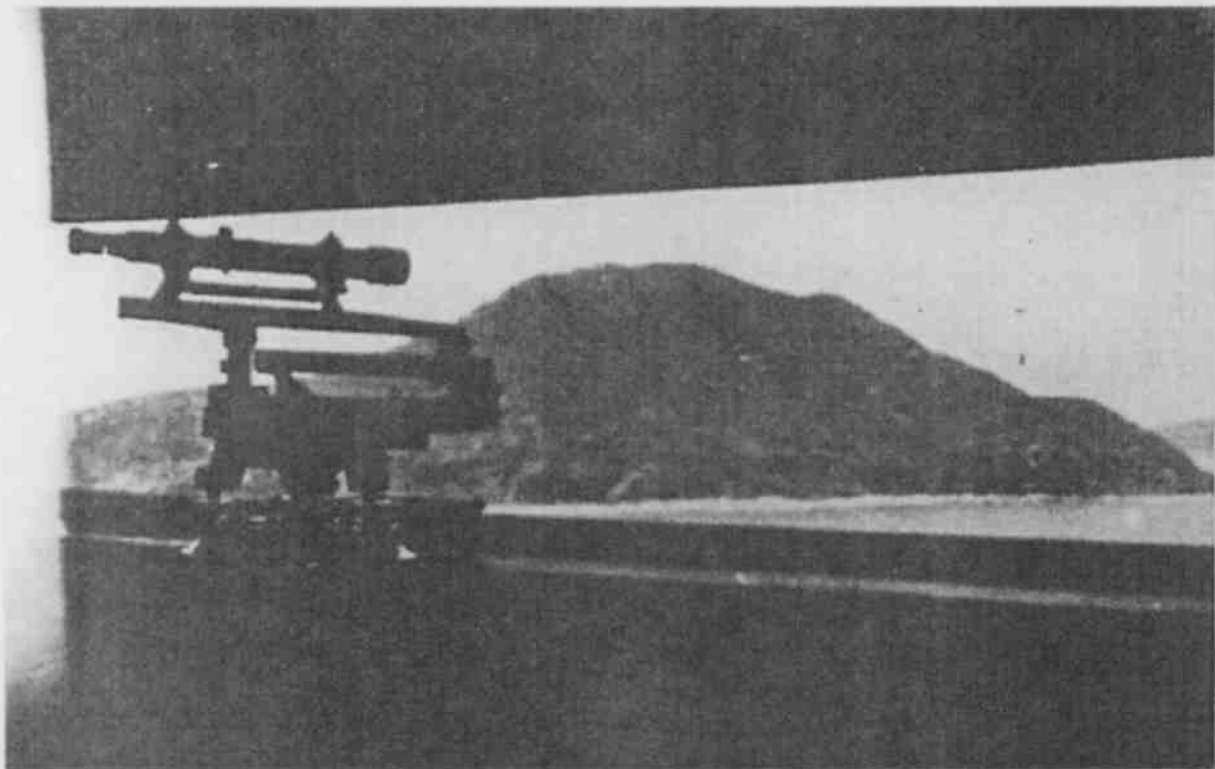
The maximum drop of the torpedo at any stage of the tide should not exceed 7.6 metres.

The minimum depth of water where the torpedo enters should not be less than 5.5 metres at any stage of the tide.

A reconnaissance by the Army, of the proposed position of the western side of TOMAREE has not been made by this H.Q. for this purpose, but the local Naval authorities advise that 9.5 metres of water can be obtained a few metres out and that there would be no difficulty about a maximum drop. A concrete pier would require to be constructed and this would be in a sheltered position on the western side of TOMAREE."



Site of the torpedo tubes, 1994



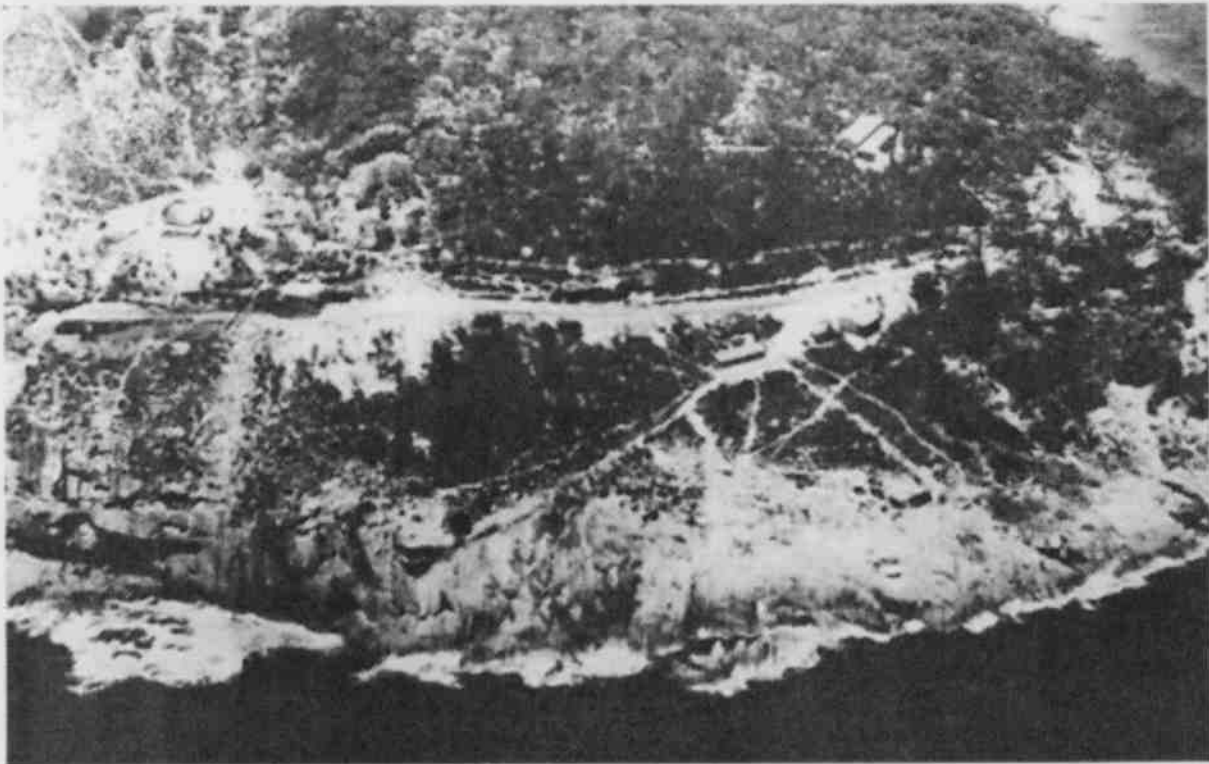
Above, view from the battery observation post, about 1943.
The instrument is a "depression rangefinder"
Below, the same view in 1994.

*Part of the report of the Technical
Director of Camouflage on a visit to an
area from Newcastle to Tomaree
February 17 - 18, 1942.*

"The Technical Director is not satisfied with the progress of the work. All the camouflage planned for this area is simple and it is essential that where conditions make it possible, it should be achieved quickly.

It must be understood that the delays have not been due to the Camouflage Officers of Eastern Command. On the contrary Lieut. Dodd in particular has done a splendid piece of work under the most difficult circumstances. Possibly delays have been unavoidable owing the Australian labour conditions which are ridiculous in total war. The fact remains that the work has taken too long. It is also clear that even simple camouflage requires constant supervision of the labour concerned. There is no feeling of urgency or keenness in the ranks. It is only a few commissioned officers and N.C.O's who have shown real interest. Possibly this still indicates a lack of general interest in concealment.

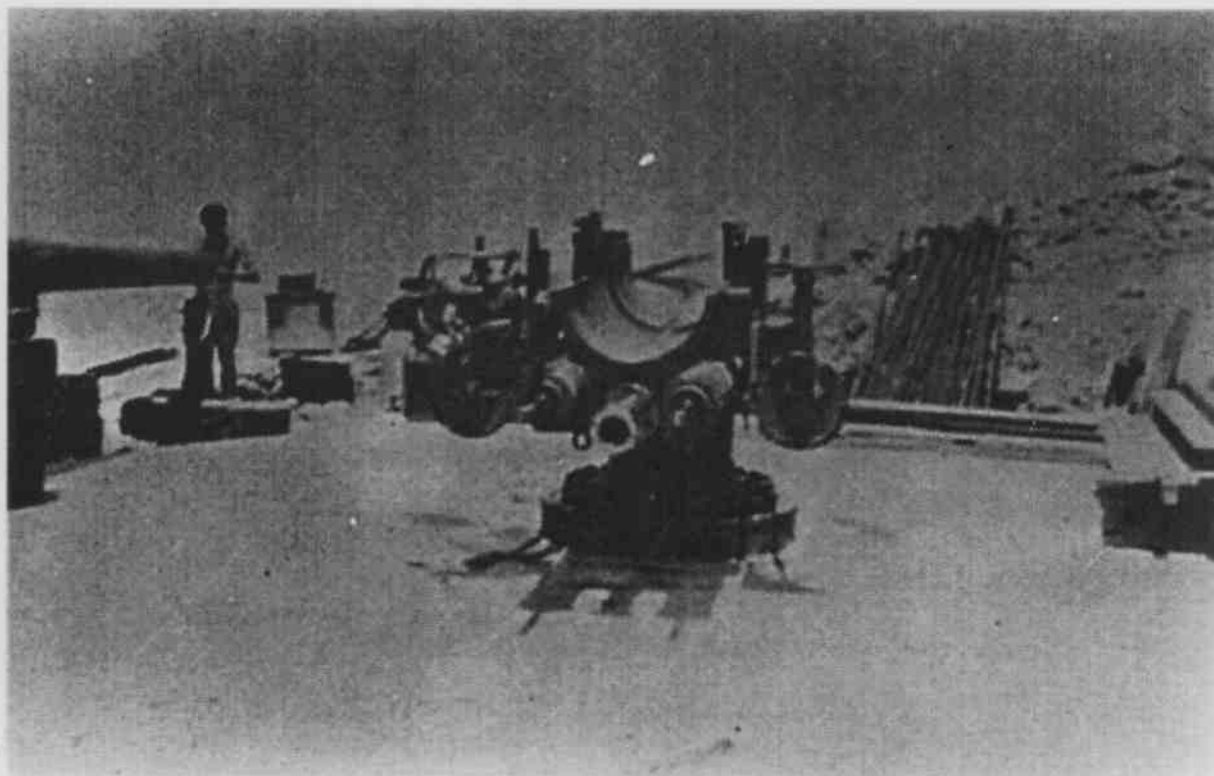
Concealment is playing a most important part in this war and every effort should be made to see that work on concealment goes at a rapid pace. The idea of men having a smoko at the end of each hour, if true, and working a limited number of hours per day does not fit in with my ideas. I am, however, only detailing the actual state of the work in this report."



These aerial photographs of Tomaree were taken about 1942 to check how much camouflage was required.

EXTRACTS FROM THE FORT TOMAREE WAR DIARY

- 31-3-1942 Concrete canopies completed on Nos 1 and 2 guns.
Troops move into huts in Upper and Lower Camps.
Work commenced on torpedo tube emplacement.
Bridge completed from shelter to rock at surf section.
- 23-4 1942 Tug *Waratah* was brought-to, and the second bring-to round passed through vessel without serious damage.
- 4-5-1942 Test round 1/2 charge fired from No 2 gun to test flash in No 2 section post. Flash does not interfere.
- 21-5-1942 Electric light and power switched on in Upper & Lower Camp.
- 10-6-1942 13.30 hours. Bomb seen dropped from plane approx. 20 kilometres bearing 120°.
- 26-6-1942 10.05 hours. Two RAAF personnel washed off rocks while fishing and drowned.
- 29-6-1942 Torpedo Tubes completed and awaiting dredging operations before trials are carried out.
- 23-7-1942 Heavy rain commenced and was still falling at the end of the month (230 millimetres to date). Drainage problems have occurred over whole hillside. Levee banks have proved effective. The main road through the camp has subsided on the edges in many places. Road to No



The six inch gun emplacements during construction in 1942

- 12 Engine Room cannot be used after heavy rain.
- 10-8-1942 Torpedo tubes tested, 2 torpedoes without war heads fired.
- 18-8-1942 Torpedo Tubes manned by Naval personnel, 2 torpedo tubes loaded ready for action with two in reserve.
- 28-8-1942 Neap spring tides washing over No 2 gun emplacement Surf Section. Portion of surf bridge washed away at No. 2 Gun. Portion of Torpedo tube retaining wall washed away.
- 16-9-1942 Visit from Mayor of Newcastle and Sir Alfred Davidson.
- 30-9-1942 Broadcast in foreign language (unidentified) picked up by 101 receiving set.
- 12-10-1942 Severe storm damage *as per separate report*.
- 18-10-1942 Mounting of No. 2 6" gun shield completed.
- 29-10-1942 6" 1/2 charge practice seaward - 12 rounds.
- 30-10-1942 3 pdr practice seaward, 2 series, 40 rounds.
- No. 14 C.A.S.L.(search light) emplacement erected.
- 3-11-1942 H.M.A.S. "Assault" now on Tomaree switchboard (extension 28).
- 28-11-1942 American aux. launch seeking shelter Port Stephens, damaged and with 10° to port having cut loose landing barge in tow, off Stephens Point, entry permitted.
- 30-11-1942 Camouflage work has been carried out on No 14 Coast Artillery Search Light emplacement which now resembles a small cottage with chimney and windows.

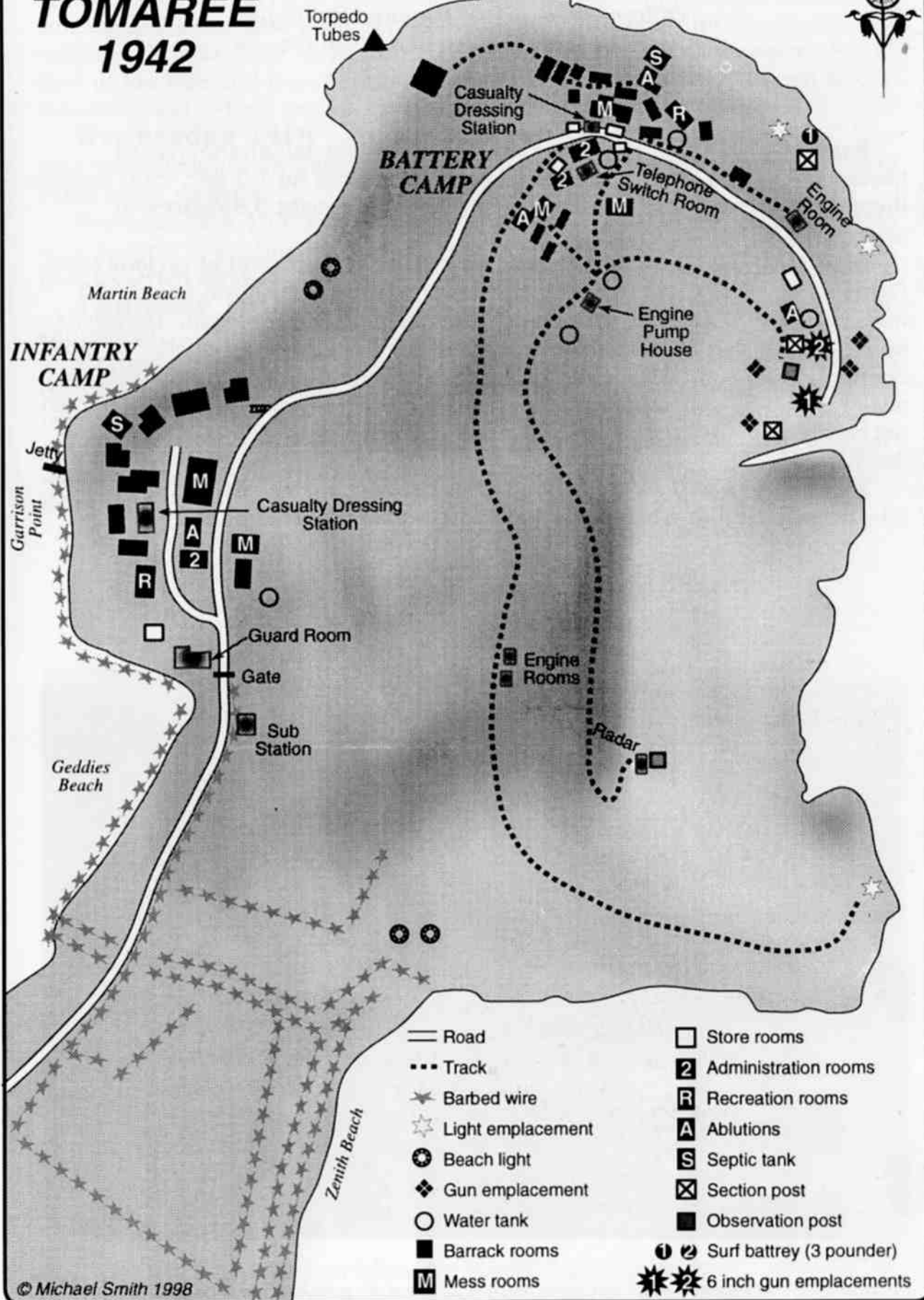


The number 2 surf gun emplacement in 1994

- 21-12-1942 Dummy location finder at Yacaaba completed. Dummy Battery site at Yacaaba visited by Leiut. Petschler.
- 13-1-1943 Electric and percussion firing mechanism changed on both 6" (152mm) mountings from left to right hand side.
- 23-1-1943 Approx. 160 V.D.C personell carried out week end exercises at Tomaree.
- 19-2-1943 Practice ammunition arrived for annual shoot.
- 19-3-1943 Rammer staves on both 6" guns shortened by 300 mm.
- 25-4-1943 Combined Unit Church parade held on Bty. Attendance Navy (U.S.A. and Australian) Army and R.A.A.F.
- 24-5-1943 Catalina crashed in Port Stephens off Jimmys beach.
- 28-5-1943 Surf No 2 gun stripped, overhauled, painted and refitted.
- 30-5-1943 Owing to torrential rains revetting has been necessary in many place to prevent land slides.
- 20-6-1943 The first two L.C.T. entered port (capable of carrying 20 fully manned tanks).
- 25-6-1943 Torpedo tubes removed by Navy to Sydney.
- 7-7-1943 Continuation of practise shoot 2010 hours 10 round 6 C.R.H. 1/2 charge, opened at Bty Control and after 3 rounds changed to section control, targets were Hong Kong type, leading target hit 3 times, range approx. 5km.
- 10-7-1943 War cemetery opened, Nelson Bay area, adjoins existing civilian cemetery.
- 16-8-1943 Head Bty. practice shoot, 20 rounds. Target south end of Yacaaba.
- 18-8-1943 Surf Section, dismanned, equipment stored in No 1 Gun floor shelter.
- 22-8-1943 Head Bty. ceases to function.
Pack horse team commenced daily ration run to Stephens Point via sand spit.
- 31-8-1943 Head Bty personnel and equipment moved out.
Lower Camp area now disused.
- 1-9-1943 Channel cut in Point Stephens sand spit by heavy seas prohibiting use by pack horse.
- 17-10-1943 Flying fox completed for garbage destruction.
- 7-12-1943 Datum Post installed on Jimmys Beach.
Command line to Stephens Island completed.
- 31-12-1943 8 series of 25mm aiming rifle fired from Battery by V.D.C. personnel. Faulty ammunition marred several of the series. A new type of target was employed. It being a Naval Fog Buoy and proved very successful, as it allowed a lighter tow line and greater speed in tow.

FORT TOMAREE 1942

0 100 200
Metres



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REPORT OF STORM DAMAGE

TOMAREE OCTOBER 1942

by Major R. S. Mort,

*Officer Commanding Tomaree Battery,
Fixed Defence Command, Nelson Bay.*

Sunday 11th - Seas rose shortly after night-fall and increased towards midnight. Gun lookouts were recalled from No 1 3 pdr. Surf Section (height 7.3 metres) and No 2 3pdr, Surf Section (height 5.8 metres) at approx. 2130 hours.

Monday 12th - Terrific seas now running with wind at cyclone force. Camouflage roof of B.O.P. partly torn away, sheets of roof iron found 150 metres away. Both 3 pdr gun emplacements continually awash; telephone on No2 3pdr gun floor washed to sea; bridge from gun floor shelter to Surf Section Post (height 20.7 metres) awash. Pyramid switch-board on wall put out of action by constant heavy seas; look-outs recalled. Also B.E.L. personnel recalled. Inspected by Bty. Captain who ordered Surf Section to "stand down".

Tuesday 13th - Mountainous seas now running. Bridge at No 2 3 Pdr. rapidly breaking up; both guns and Section Post continually awash;



Number 1 surf battery 1994 now used as a navigational beacon

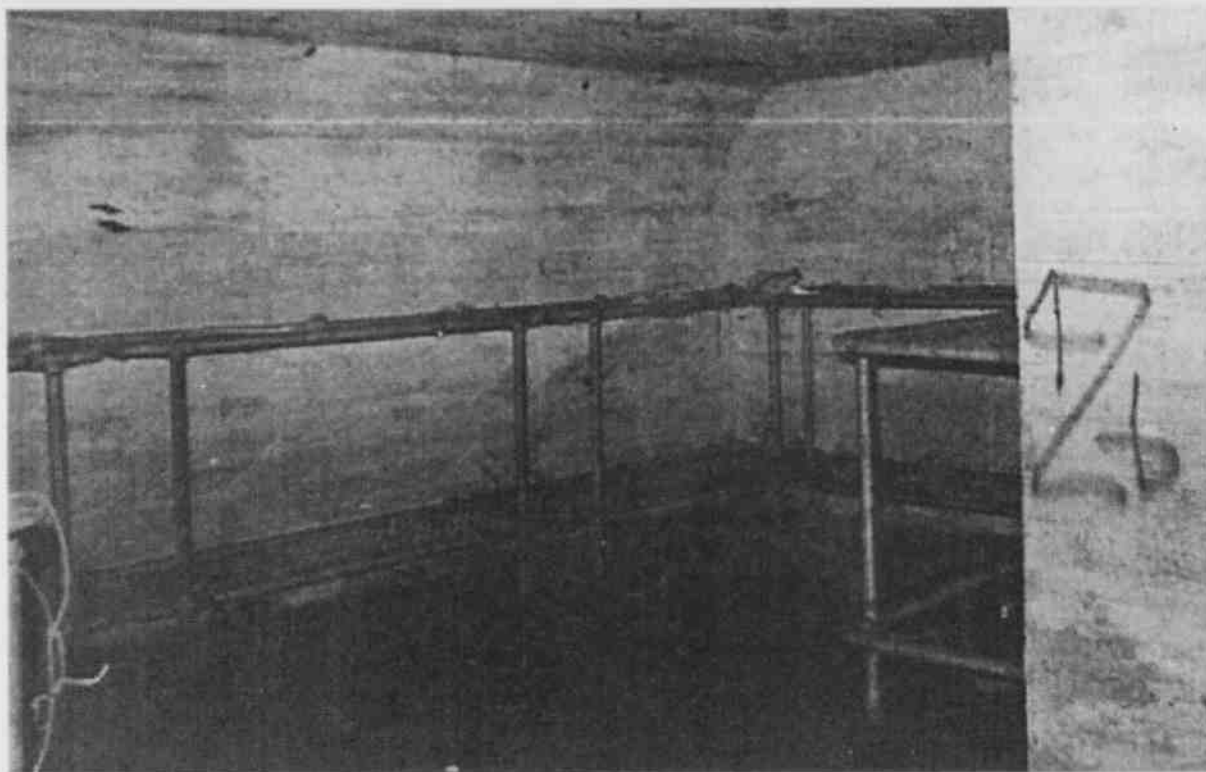
gun floor shelter at No 2 3Pdr. broke up completely within an hour at approx. 1100 hours; most articles of value being salvaged. Seas now breaking over No 13 Light emplacement (22 metres); shutters on Southern side carried away, also portion of camouflage. Projector and accessories salvaged. Camouflage on A.A.L.M.G. Posts torn away. O.C. inspected No. 1 Surf at low tide and found ammunition to be apparently dry although boxes extremely wet. Hand grip on shoulder rest broken off and recovered.

Wednesday 14th - Seas now their worst, all Posts previously mentioned continually awash plus No 1 6 inch gun (height 53 metres) being continually sprayed.

Numbers 12 & 13 C.A.S.L's not exposed this night as both emplacements were subject to continuous heavy spray. Roof of shed over torpedo tubes partly carried away.

Thursday 15th - Seas still too high for inspection or maintenance of equipment.

Friday 16th - O.C. inspected Nos 1 & 2 guns Surf Section and found both in an extremely rusty state, instructed Section Commander to strip all moveable parts and carry out maintenance. 303 rifle fitted to No 2 gun is practically ruined. Two boxes of ammunition on No 1 Surf found to contain approx. 180mm of water. Ammunition in No 2 ammunition recess in excellent order.



The room behind the Number 2 gun emplacement before the doors were welded shut in about 1987

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