

This month I am showing you a document I found recently in the Melsetter Estate Records under collection reference D34/A. It is an 1898 copy of the original 1814 agreement between The Principal Officers of the Ordnance and Major James Moodie for Hackness for the purposes of building a battery and two Martello Towers. The copy (reference: D34/A/3/1/13) was made up for the new owner Thomas Middlemore, as it is stored in a bundle of his rental agreements for many of the properties on the estate.

I also enclose a photograph taken of the Martello tower at Hackness from the archives. Please quote negative number: L5851-2 if you would like a copy of it.

Other we have archives which relate to the Martello Towers are:

D1/307 'Longhope and its Approaches' 1975-1985 printed booklet designed for school pupils visiting the Martello Tower, Longhope, c. 1980

D36/3/8 R P Fereday papers, 1970-1973

Folder containing correspondence regarding sources for publication of The Longhope Battery and Towers; notes; reviews; printed material regarding other similar Martello towers, e.g. Dymchurch, Eastbourne, Carleton, New Brunswick etc. [For information on Martello Towers at Longhope and other sites see [D112/Y1/17].

D112/Y1/17 Martello Towers. Photocopies of plans, specifications, correspondence regarding the Martello Tower at Longhope. Originals in P.R.O., London. Also numerous articles on Martello Towers in Ireland, England, Scotland and Canada. Photographs of Tower at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

D70/13/8 Fereday Prize - Orkney Heritage Society, 2010
What was the role of the Martello Towers in Orkney? by Guille Lopez, KGS
(Highly Commended)

OSA/RO5/166 Orkney Sound Archive/Radio Orkney Collection/5 inch Reels
n.d. Topics: Martello tower Duration: 3 minutes 50 seconds.

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Brief History of the Hackness Battery and the Martello Towers

After war was declared between Britain and America in 1812 British merchant shipping came under increasing danger from American privateers. Initially the privateers operated around the American coast, but by 1813 larger vessels were being used and were hunting in British waters. Merchant vessels began to gather at Longhope, where British warships would escort them safely across the North Sea. This offered some protection on the journey, but there were concerns that the large number of ships waiting at Longhope were in danger of becoming a target for the Americans.

In the spring of 1813 it was suggested that some sort of permanent protection be established at Longhope and this was given consideration by the Admiralty. After some discussion about the alternatives it was decided to build a gun battery at Hackness, on the south side of the entrance to Longhope Bay, comprising of eight 24 pound guns. In the following year the defences were strengthened with the construction of two martello towers. The towers are named after a similarly shaped structure built at Mortella Point, Corsica, which successfully repulsed an attack by the Royal Navy in 1794. There were over 100 towers built in Britain in the early nineteenth century, but only three of them were in Scotland, with the other one being built at Leith. The two Orkney towers were built on either side of the entrance to Longhope Bay, the northern one at Crowness and the other near to Hackness Battery. They were completed in 1815.

They are constructed of sandstone and stand 33 feet (10 metres) high. The walls are constructed so that they are thicker on the seaward side, therefore offering more protection from any attack, and the doorway is at a height of 12 feet (4 metres) from the ground. Each tower had a 24 pound roof mounted gun. The towers and Battery were upgraded in 1866 due to increased fears of a French invasion, and all the guns were replaced with 68 pounders, capable of firing a shell one mile. The guns were actually never fired in anger but, in fact, were fired just once, in 1892, as part of a drill. They were removed in 1900.

Hackness Battery was eventually sold in 1922 and the buildings were converted for farm use. The Battery and tower at Hackness are now under the care and supervision of Historic Scotland. They are both open to the public from April to September. Crowness Martello Tower remains in private ownership.

David Mackie



D34/A/3/1/13
Dated 29th September 1814

The Principal Officers of
the Ordnance
and
Major James Moodie
(Copy)

Memorandum
of
Agreement

1898
40102

Murray Beith & Murray W.S.

Memorandum of Agreement made
the twenty ninth day of September in
the year of our Lord One thousand
eight hundred and fourteen Between
James Moodie of Melsetter in North
Britain but now residing at the
bevil Street Coffee house in the Strand
in the County of Middlesex Esquire
of the one part and Robert Smith
of Austin Friars in the city of London
Gentleman (as Agent for and on
behalf of the principal Officers of his
Majesty's Ordnance for and on
behalf of his Majesty) of the other
part as follows. —

First.

The said James Moodie doth
hereby agree to let^{to} the said
principal Officers for the use of
his Majesty at or for the sum
of Forty pounds per Annum
All such spots or pieces or parcels of
ground situate at Hackness and
Brockness (being projecting points
of

of Land which form the entrance
of the Harbour of Long Hope)
in the Parish of Walls and Island
of Hoy in the county of Orkney
in North Britain as have been
or shall be selected by the
Commanding Royal Engineer
in North Britain aforesaid for
the construction of a battery
and two Martello Towers with their
accompanying Buildings for the
defence of the Anchorage at Long
Hope Sound which ^{said} projecting points
of Land belong to the said James
Moodie as parts and ^{ap} pertinents of
his Estate in the said Parish
And also the beach Land in front
of the said Works respectively
down to Low Water mark together
with the right of way or Road
with Houses, carts, carriages or
otherwise to and from the said
Works respectively, as well for
landing Materials and Stores
as

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as for the use of the Officers, Soldiers
and others stationed at the
said Works respectively such ways
or Roads to be marked out by
the said Commanding Royal
Engineer, Reserving Nevertheless
to the said James Moodie, his
heirs and Assigns the full
power and privilege to cut and
carry away between Sunrise and
sunset within the limits of five
hundred yards on the East and
West sides of the said Battery And
also within five hundreds yards
on the North and South Sides of
the said two Martello Towers as
well as for the space of two hundred
yards in front of all or any of
them all such Sea Weed as shall
be growing on the Rocks upon the
said fronts and within the said
limits or on any part thereof. he,
the said James Moodie giving due
Notice to the commanding Officer
at

at each Station of the time he
proposes to commence cutting and
carrying away the said Sea Weed
from the said fronts and the limits
specified on each side of them
And also to and for the tenants
of the said James Moodie his
heirs and Assigns to take and
carry away for manure all
such species of Sea Weed called
Red Ware only as shall be
washed on Shore within the
said limits they the said
Tenants giving due notice to
the Officer commanding at
the Battery or Tower from whence
the said Red Ware is to be
taken so as to prevent all
interruption of or interference
with Military Duties and
practice And the said James
Moodie engages and agrees that
no kelp shall be burnt or
any fires made for that purpose
~~use~~ in

in front or within five hundred yards of the East and West sides of the said Battery and of the North and South sides of the said Martello Towers respectively. And also that no Houses or other buildings, Walls, fences or other erections shall be erected or constructed within one hundred yards ~~of the East and West sides~~ of the said Battery and Martello Towers or any of them but the land within the said limits shall and may be cultivated or pastured as at present And also that the said James Moodie shall and will at the expense of the said principal officers ~~or their successors~~ principal officers of the Ordnance for the time being on or before the twenty ninth day of October next execute a proper Lease or Tack in the Scots form for letting

letting and demising the said
Spots or pieces or parcels of
ground right of way and premises
with their Appurtenances unto
the said principal Officers or
to such person as the said
principal Officers (on behalf of
his Majesty shall appoint his
Executors, Administrators and
Assigns In trust for his Majesty
for the term of Ninety nine years
from the twelfth day of November
or Martinmas One thousand eight
hundred and thirteen in which
year the said Works were begun
^{at} and under the yearly Rent of
Forty pounds payable half yearly
And the said Robert Smith
hereby agrees on the part of the
said Principal Officers that they
the said Principal Officers or
their successors principal Officers
as aforesaid or such person as
aforesaid shall and will
execute

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execute a counterpart of the said Lease or Tack and pay or cause to be paid to the said James Moodie his heirs and Assigns the said yearly Rent or Sum of Forty pounds in manner aforesaid And lastly the said principal Officers being already in possession of part of the Land required for the purposes aforesaid (by and with the consent of the said James Moodie it is agreed that they shall and may take possession of the remainder of the said premises when and as soon as the same shall be selected by the said Commanding Royal Engineer In Witness whereof the said parties to these presents have hereunto set their hands the day and year first above written.

(sgd) Robert Smith

Signed by the above named Robert Smith in the presence of:-

(sgd) Geo. Spalding