

## **The Battery, Waltness, Shapinsay by Kenny & Sheila Garson**

An extensive WWII Battery, which was in use from 1940-1950, ranges along the northern shore of the farm of Waltness. It is made up of the Castle and Galtness Batteries, part of the Kirkwall Harbour defences, along with a Navy Camp. Over 300 men were stationed here during the war, which must have made a considerable impact on an island with a population of 584 (1931 Census).

Castle Battery (HY4810 1996) named after Balfour Castle was established in September 1941. It comprised two 4.7inch guns and two 90cm searchlights, with associated buildings, along with a Mine Warfare Station, which was responsible for the minefield stretching from the Galt to Gairsay. The hut used as the Mine Warfare Station was fitted out to look like a ship complete with bridge and mechanical semaphore signalling.

The attached camp – shared by the Galtness Battery – included an engine house, hospital, garage and picture house where such famous stars as Yehudi Menuhin performed (his performance of 'The Flight of the Bumble Bee' is still remembered). Also on the base was a climbing structure used for drills and on the nearby Galt, an assault course.

It appears that this battery was never completed as the guns remained uncovered and a corrugated iron hut was used to house the Battery Observation Post. The magazine is puzzling, for although a building close to the guns appears typical of a magazine the magazine actually in use was some distance away. Perhaps the proper magazine was completed too late to be used.

Although the huts have long gone the foundations are still clearly visible along with stone edged paths. The more substantial structures made of reinforced mass concrete survive. These include the searchlight and gun emplacements, shelter, battery observation post and the range finder tower. The shelter and observation post are below ground level and have been partly flooded for a number of years and both the searchlight emplacements stand atop clay banks, which are eroding.

The Galtness Battery (HY 4756 1984), on the point of Saltness, takes its name from the nearby headland, the Galt. It was established in May 1940 as an emergency battery with one 12 pound gun, but by March 1941 this had been replaced by a twin 6 pound gun. The magazine surrounds the gun emplacement and shelter, which are dwarfed by the three storeys Director Tower. There were also two 90 cm searchlights and an engine house. All these buildings are still standing although the metal 'H' beams in the tower are now very rusty and, like the Castle, the clay banks are eroding away under one of the searchlight emplacements.

Both Castle and Galtness have engine houses of a style typical throughout the Orkney batteries, Nissan huts clad in concrete to protect against aircraft and shell splinters. At Galtness there is also a small square engine house of mass concrete.

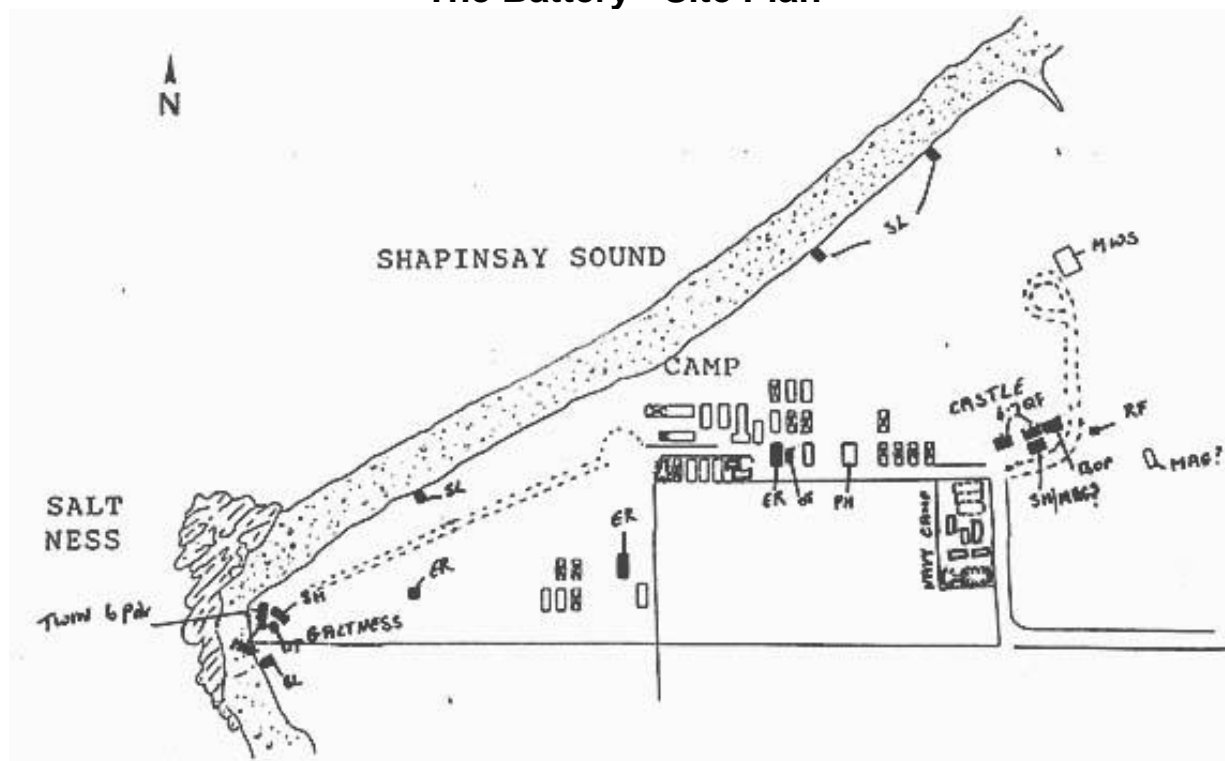
The Navy Camp (HY4803 1991) was situated near the Castle gun emplacements with land being requisitioned in October 1940. Plans of the site, dated 02.10.1940, suggest the Mine Warfare Station mentioned above was associated with this camp rather than the Castle Battery. Today all that remains of the Navy Camp are foundations, paths and a pit where the air raid shelter was situated.

Water for the camp was piped approx. 2.25 miles from the east side of the Mill Dam to storage tanks, at what became the Crusher (OIC Yard), the highest point along the Westside Road, and the camp was gravity fed from here. These storage tanks had a capacity of 12,000 gallons and were still in place until a few years ago. Waltness used this water supply right up until the late 1970s when mains water was installed.



Galtness searchlight emplacements, director tower etc. Note rigs visible in foreground

## The Battery - Site Plan



### Key to Site Plan

BOP	Battery Observation Post
DT	Director Tower
ER	Engine Room
MAG	Magazine
OT	Oil Tanks
PH	Picture House
RF	Range Finder
SH	Shelter
SL	Searchlight
Twin 6 Pdr	Twin 6 Pounder Quick Firer Mark 1
	Range - 5150 yds
	Projectile Weight - 6.25 lbs
	Rate of Fire - 72 rounds per minute
4.7QF	4.7" Quick Fired Mark 4 on Central Pivot Mounting Mark 3
	Range - 11800 yds
	Projectile Weight - 45 lbs
	<b>Rate of Fire - 10 rounds per minute</b>



Huts used for sleeping



Buildings still standing