

# **HARDY'S HEAD BATTERY**

**BERRY HEAD, BRIXHAM**

An Archaeological Investigation

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March 2000

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Fig. 2 Site plan

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# **HARDY'S HEAD BATTERY, BRIXHAM**

## **Archaeological Investigation during Site Management**

- V.J.A. Fiorato

### **Summary**

During the stripping of turf from Hardy's Head Battery in February 2000, an archaeological watching brief was maintained and supervised metal detection took place. Turf had grown over some of the granite gun platforms obscuring detail and confusing the interpretation of the site. The earth revetment was also suffering from poaching. The turf was therefore removed from the gun platforms and kerbs and the bank was patched. On completion of fieldwork the exposed gun bases were surveyed.

The investigation recovered a small number of Napoleonic finds including white glazed pottery, clay pipe stems and two military buttons. These finds have been deposited with the Brixham Museum.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report describes the results of an archaeological investigation undertaken during management of the Hardy's Head Battery site. This was undertaken by Veronica Fiorato (Torbay Archaeological Officer) with assistance from Steve Ayres (Countryside Manager, Berry Head Country Park) and volunteers from the Brixham Museum on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2000. Additional surveying was completed on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2000 by Veronica Fiorato and Richard Brown, a volunteer.

The purpose of the site management was to remove areas of turf which were obscuring the stone features on the site such as the gun platforms, kerbs and parapet wall. Poaching of the north east bank was also repaired using turves removed from elsewhere on the Battery. It is hoped that its improved appearance will result in a greater appreciation of the importance of this site.

### **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Hardy's Head Battery lies on the north side of the Berry Head promontory (SX 9405 5667). It is a former coastal battery of 1780 lying to the north-west of Berry Head Fort. It was dismantled around 1783 but was re-activated in 1794 as part of the response to the threat of a Napoleonic invasion. Its gun platforms and parapet wall survive. In its initial phase it comprised three 24-pounder cannon on wooden gun platforms "en barbette", that is to say that they fired over their surrounding parapet rather than through it. During its second phase the armament was increased from three to four guns, one of which could offer fire to cover the northern side of the main fort. The wooden gun platforms were replaced by granite blocks which survive today, as does the low parapet of earth and limestone rubble which encloses its north, east and west sides.

The footings of a small building or buildings survives at the south-eastern corner of the site and may have been a magazine.

### 3. STATUTORY PROTECTION

Hardy's Head Battery is not currently accorded any form of legislative protection. However, it has been proposed for Scheduled Monument status (SM 29694/02). The site management was therefore discussed with Dr John Salvatore (MPP Archaeologist), Caroline Vulliamy (Field Monument Warden) and Ian Morrison (Inspector of Ancient Monuments) of English Heritage before proceeding.

### 4. PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

The site was recorded in plan and section in 1990 (see Pye & Slater 1990). No intrusive archaeological investigation is known.

### 5. METAL DETECTOR SURVEY

Before the commencement of work a Level was used to delineate the extent of the area to be subject to the metal detection survey (see figure 2). All points were surveyed using an Ordnance Survey temporary bench mark situated at the north-western corner of the site. The site was then surveyed by three detectors. There was some contamination from modern rubbish such as coin loss, ring-pulls and silver chocolate paper. A number of post-medieval finds were made and in each case the three dimensional position was recorded (see finds catalogue). Non-metallic finds made in association with a metal find were also recorded.

### 6. TURF STRIPPING

Turf was removed where it had encroached on all four of the gun platforms. It was also removed from the interior face of the rampart at the junction of each gun platform and rampart to expose a granite kerb. The kerbs extended the width of the platforms and did not form a continuous kerb around the rampart interior. A small section of limestone rubble wall was also exposed on the external north face of the rampart but due to the practical difficulties (this wall was close to the cliff edge and the vegetation firmly rooted) it was decided not to attempt to expose the full length of this feature. The building footings in the south-east corner of the battery were not cleared. Removal of a turf during the discovery of a button by a metal detector revealed that a demolition layer lay directly under the turf comprising slate and clay tile. This was clearly too fragile to expose and was left in situ.

The turf stripping was monitored by the Archaeological Officer. Non-metallic post-medieval (rather than modern) finds disturbed during this process were retained and recorded in three dimensions. In addition to the gun platform kerbs, two features were uncovered on the surface of gun platforms 1 and 3. On gun platform 1 a hole had been cut into but not through one of the slabs (see figure 2). Its function is not clear but was perhaps used as a fixing position. It is believed to have been functional as had it been a natural flaw the stone could

have been reversed and the flaw hidden. On gun platform 3 a small square area of mortar/cement was uncovered the function of which is unknown. It is likely to be later than the structure. A subsequent additional feature has been identified on gun platform 1 comprising an arrow carved into the stone (Masterson pers. comm.) This had presumably been missed during the field work due to the mud distributed over the stones during the turf stripping process. The feature was located by Veronica Fiorato on the 8<sup>th</sup> March in the south-east corner of the platform. This may have been a survey marker as it bears similarities to a bench mark.

A badly poached area on the south face of the north rampart was patched by turves removed from the gun platforms.

## 7. SURVEY

On completion of the turf stripping and metal detector survey the site was surveyed to record the three dimensional positions of the four gun platforms as exposed (see figure 2). The heights were tied into the Ordnance Survey National Grid on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2000 using an Ordnance Survey bench mark inside the gateway of the Berry Head North Fort.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The field work has recovered a small number of artefacts contemporary with the use of the Battery. More importantly it has exposed the principal features of the battery and identified that a granite kerb was located at the junction of each gun platform and the rampart.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to the following for their assistance and hard work during field work: Metal Detectors- John Britten, Otto Schneider, Doug Oseland; also Alan Masterson, Mark King, Steve Ayres and Richard Brown. Dr Philip Armitage, Curator Brixham Museum, is thanked for his comments on the finds.

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## FINDS CATALOGUE

Note: The finds numbers have been designated in groups i.e. SF1 relates to a group of finds from the same location. The location of each group is shown on Figure 2. Height above sea level is recorded in the catalogue

<i>SF number</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Height above sea level</i>
<b>Metal Buttons</b>			
4	1	Uniform button. Pewter, diameter 21.5mm. Inscribed "88" i.e. the 88 <sup>th</sup> Regiment of Foot (Connaught Rangers), other ranks jacket button. Napoleonic War period.	
5	1	Plain convex (slightly domed) metal button. Diameter 12.4mm. Napoleonic.	
<b>Copper Alloy</b>			
7	1	Unidentified object. ?Modern.	
8	1	Rectangular ?stud. Period unknown.	
9	1	Possibly a percussion cap for a rifle. Post-Napoleonic War: ?1830s-?1880s	
<b>Lead</b>			
u/s	1	Pistol ball. Diameter 13.1mm	
<b>Clay pipe</b>			
2	1	Stem fragment. Napoleonic.	
3	1	Stem fragment. Napoleonic.	
6	1	Stem fragment. Napoleonic.	
<b>Glass</b>			
1	1	Sherd of green glass. Modern.	
3	1	Sherd of white/green glass. Napoleonic.	
<b>Pottery</b>			
1	2	Sherds of white glazed fluted ware. Napoleonic.	
3	4	Sherds of white/cream ware. Napoleonic.	
4	1	Sherd of white glazed fluted ware. Napoleonic.	
u/s	1	Sherd of white glazed fluted ware. Modern.	
<b>Tile</b>			
3	1	Napoleonic.	

Description	Level reading (metres)	Height above sea level (metres)	Angle (degrees)	Comments	Distances (metres)
Bench Mark	-	57.78	-	Bench Mark on the north wall of North Fort gateway	-
Level to bench mark	0.78	58.56	-	Height of level	-
Level to point 1	1.49	57.07	-	Height of ground at point 1	-
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level position to point 1	1.22	58.29	-	Height of 2 <sup>nd</sup> level position	-
2 <sup>nd</sup> Level position to point 2	2.95	55.34	-	Height of ground at point 2	-
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level position to point 2	0.068	55.408	-	Height of 3 <sup>rd</sup> level position	-
3 <sup>rd</sup> Level position to O.S TBM, Hardy's Head Battery	3.90	51.508	-	Height above sea level of O.S TBM at Hardy's Head Battery	-
Level to O.S. TBM	1.50	<b>53.008</b>	4	Height of level at Hardy's Head Battery	Distance TBM to point 2 – 10.95
Level to point 2	1.465	51.543	314	Height of ground at survey point 2	Distance point 2 to point 3 – 14.10
Level to point 3	0.86	52.148	112	Height of ground at survey point 3	Distance point 3 to point 4 – 7.62
Level to point 4	0.0175	52.9905	113.5	Height of ground at survey point 4	Distance point 4 to point 5 – 3.69
Level to point 5	0.04	52.968	107	Height of ground at survey point 5	
Level to SF1	1.58	51.428	137	Height of SF1	5.91 from O.S.TBM
Level to SF2	1.82	51.188	137	Height of SF2	5.79 from O.S. TBM
Level to SF3	0.64	52.368	98	Height of SF3	3.79 from survey point 4
Level to SF4	0.61	52.398	100	Height of SF4	3.32 from survey point 4
Level to SF5	1.598	51.41	55	Height of SF5	7.93 from survey point 4

Level to SF6	1.82	51.188	11	Height of SF6	1.94 from O.S. TBM
Level to SF7	1.72	51.288	37	Height of SF7 and gun platform	5.70 from O.S. TBM
Level to SF8	1.74	51.268	15	Height of SF8 and gun platform	3.72 from O.S. TBM
Level to SF9	1.785	51.223	25	Height of SF9 and gun platform	5.2 from O.S. TBM
Level to 1a	1.182	51.826	344		1a to 1b - 2.75
Level to 1b	1.835	51.173	355		1b to 1c - 4.58
Level to 1c	1.56	51.448	25		1c to 1d - 4.23
Level to 1d	1.57	51.438	25		1d to 1a - 4.60
Level to 2a	1.86	51.148	15		2a to 2b - 2.78
Level to 2b	1.855	51.153	25		2b to 2c - 4.63
Level to 2c	1.59	51.418	38		2c to 2d - 3.37
Level to 2d	1.585	51.423	21		2d to 2e - 0.38
Level to 2e	1.61	51.398	19		2e to 2a - 4.23
Level to 3a	1.825	51.183	32		3a to 3b - 2.85
Level to 3b	1.82	51.188	40		3b to 3c - 4.22
Level to 3c	1.585	51.423	51		3c to 3d - 0.50
Level to 3d	1.57	51.438	51		3d to 3e - 3.29
Level to 3e	1.59	51.418	39		3e to 3a - 4.60
Level to 4a	1.68	51.328	55		4a to 4b - 2.76
Level to 4b	1.78	51.228	61		4b to 4c - 2.84
Level to 4c	1.80	51.208	70		4c to 4d - 2.58
Level to 4d	1.65	51.358	72		4d to 4a - 3.71
Level to top of rampart north wall	1.95	51.058	12		O.S TBM to top of wall - 3.67
Level to bottom of rampart north wall	2.26	50.748	12		O.S TBM to bottom of wall - 3.82
2a to top of north rampart wall	-	-	-	-	3.54