

The Lost Forts of Hythe – a piece by Andy Curran, supplemented with a number of photographs from the Society's archive

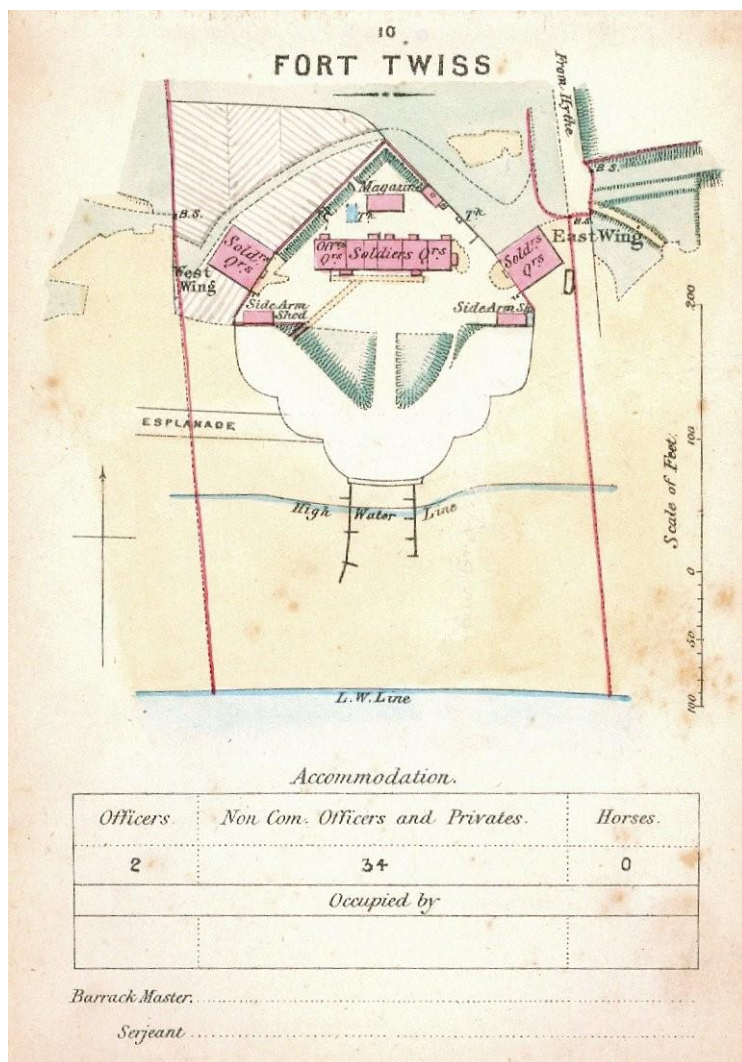
Where is this?



It is on the promenade at the end of Twiss Rd, but what is it?

It is all that remains of Fort Twiss. Fort Twiss was named after General William Twiss a talented military engineer who worked on improving defences along the coast. He worked on upgrading Sandgate Castle, designing Shorncliffe Redoubt, the Royal Military Canal and the Martello Towers.

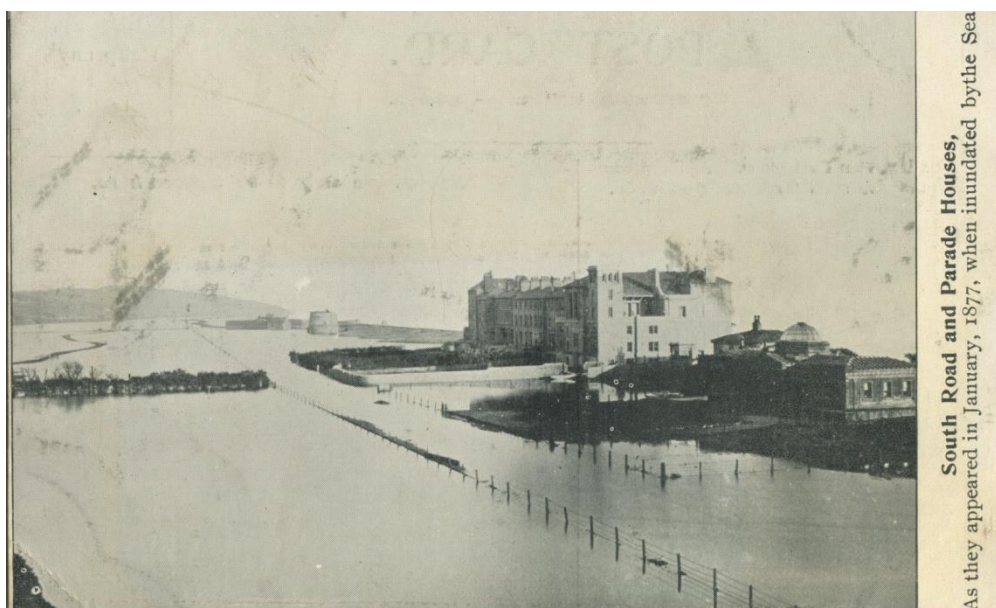
He also designed the Grand Shaft at Western Heights, Dover, which is made up of two shafts, one inside the other. The central shaft being a light-well with windows cut in the walls to give light to three spiral staircases built into the outer shaft; this gave quick access to the Dover Port below.



Left: Plan of Fort Twiss (note the line of the esplanade)

Fort Twiss was built in 1798 and was a self-contained triangular fort on a small scale. The 'terreplein', slightly raised to give command of the sea, accommodated 6 ~ 24 pounders, a brick loop-holed wall 3.5 metres high extended from the terreplein's corners to form a sharp point at the rear. The main entrance, guardroom and ancillary buildings were spaced along the exterior walls. In 1869, parts were demolished and Beaconsfield Terrace built on the site in the 1880s (named as a tribute to Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield).

Below: a postcard photograph (1877) showing the Great Flood, providing a rare sighting of Martello Tower 11 and what remained of Fort Twiss, both visible in the distance.



Now let's go on an imaginary stroll westward down the promenade.



The blue rectangle in the photograph above, is the end of a row of beach huts and a cafe. This is where Martello 11 stood. Continue on until we reach the end of Stade St. It was so-called because it led up to a Stade or Jetty. I'm told that coal was still being off-loaded here in the 1930s.

Where The Waterfront Restaurant now stands is the site of Martello 12. The tower is seen in the following photograph, taken in the late 1870s, standing beyond the incomplete Moyle Tower building (now the site of Moyle Court).



Continuing along West Parade we pass Martello 13, painted white and converted into a house.

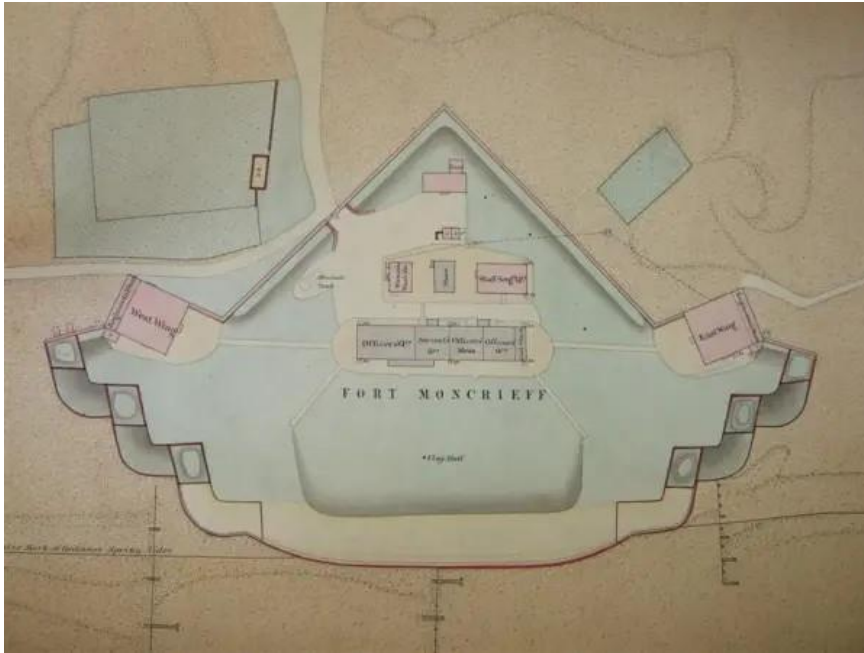
At the end of the promenade we step down onto the beach. Go down the side of The Lazy Shack cafe which is in the former Lifeboat Station with the even earlier Lifeboat Station behind it. Perhaps stop to read the Civic Society heritage information about Hythe's lifeboats and the Ranges.

Walk along the track between the fishermen's huts and the new apartments onto the shingle again until we reach the boundary of the Army Ranges. If a red flag is flying over the range hut we can go no further but if it is not then check the firing times on the notice board on the side of the hut. If it is marked 'closed' on our day it means the range is not in use and so we can go around the hut and step up onto the track which runs along the whole of the ranges. The first Martello we come to is number 14; the next one is number 15. Halfway between them is the site of Fort Sutherland, shown in the photograph below.



It was similar in design to Fort Twiss but larger with 8~24 pounders.

It was damaged by the sea in 1869 but the foundations of the outer fort wall remained visible on aerial photographs taken in 2001. Much further along we would get to the site of Fort Moncrief, if we could find it! I can give you a map reference if you like but I have never been able to find any trace of it!



Left: Plan of Fort Moncrief

Again its design was similar to Fort Twiss but, like Fort Sutherland, larger with 8~24 pounders. It became a Coastguard Station, but was undermined by the sea by 1870 and washed away shortly after.

All three Forts were built in 1798

Finally, below is a photograph from the Society's 'Horton Collection of digital scans of original glass plate negatives' taken from near to the top of Blackhouse Hill in the 1890s, which shows the line of Martello Towers running into the distance. Fort Sutherland is just visible.

