

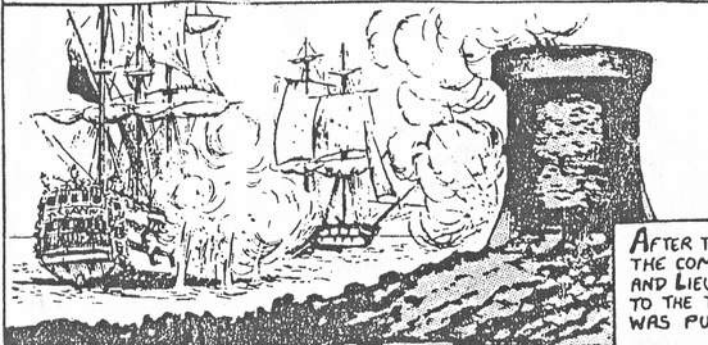
Martello Towers

A Simple Guide

THE MARTELLO TOWERS, A FAMILIAR SIGHT ALONG THE SOUTH COAST, WERE INSPIRED BY THE TOWER AT MORTELLA POINT, CORSICA. IN 1794 THE BRITISH ATTACKED THE ISLAND, OCCUPIED BY NAPOLEON'S TROOPS. TWO SHIPS BOMBARDED THE TOWER BUT WERE FORCED TO WITHDRAW AFTER SUSTAINING SERIOUS DAMAGE AND 60 CASUALTIES.



DESPITE CONTINUOUS HEAVY FIRING, THE TOWER HELD OUT FOR TWO MORE DAYS. BOTH NAVAL AND MILITARY OFFICERS WERE IMPRESSED BY TOWER'S STRENGTH.



AFTER THE NAVY'S FAILURE, THE ARMY, UNDER THE COMMAND OF MAJOR-GENERAL DAVID DUNDAS, AND LIEUTENANT-GENERAL JOHN MORE LAID SIEGE TO THE TOWER. A BATTERY OF FOUR GUNS WERE PUSHED TO WITHIN 150 YARDS OF ITS WALLS.



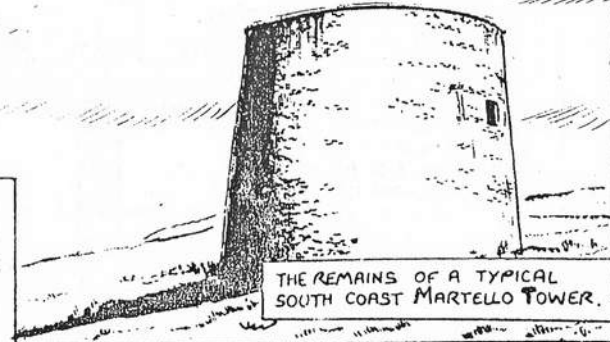
MANY OF THE OFFICERS WHO HAD SERVED IN THE CORSICAN CAMPAIGN LATER HELD IMPORTANT POSTS IN ENGLAND, AND IT WAS THEY WHO SUGGESTED COPIES OF THE MORTELLA TOWER BE BUILT ALONG THE SOUTH COAST.



MARTELLO TOWERS WERE NOT REFERRED TO AS SUCH UNTIL 1803. PREVIOUSLY THEY WERE KNOWN SIMPLY AS 'SEATOWERS', 'CORSICAN TOWERS' OR 'BOMB-PROOF TOWERS'

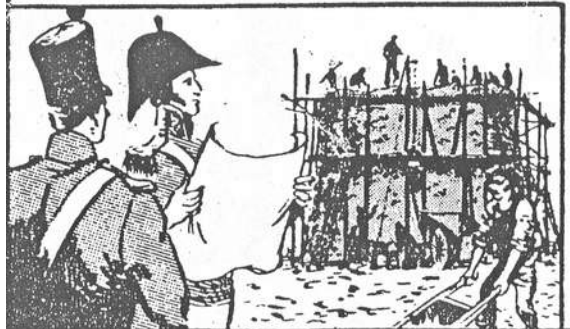


IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE NAME MARTELLO, INSTEAD OF MORTELLA IS OF ITALIAN ORIGIN. THERE WERE SIMILAR TOWERS IN ITALY CALLED TORI DI MARTELLO. MARTELLO IS ITALIAN FOR HAMMER. EACH TOWER CONTAINED AN ALUM BELL WHICH WAS STRUCK WITH A HAMMER.



THE REMAINS OF A TYPICAL SOUTH COAST MARTELLO TOWER.

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY, NAPOLEON HAD BECOME SO POWERFUL THAT HE BEGAN THREATENING ENGLAND WITH INVASION. AT A CONFERENCE HELD AT ROCHESTER IT WAS DECIDED TO BUILD 73 MARTELLO TOWERS ALONG THE MOST VULNERABLE STRETCH OF COAST BETWEEN FOLKESTONE AND SEAFORD IN SUSSEX.



TO DISCOVER THE RIGHT STRENGTH OF THE WALLS, CANNON BALLS WERE FIRED AT THEM UNTIL A STRENGTH WAS ACHIEVED WHERE THEY BOUNCED OFF.

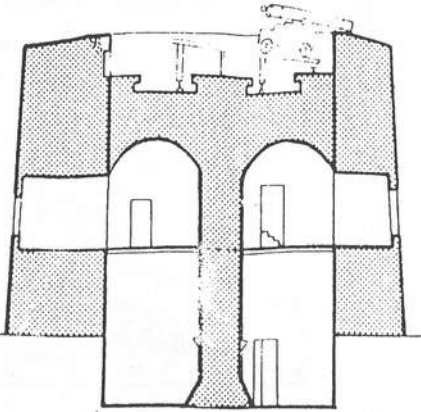


EACH TOWER HAD A GARRISON OF ONE OFFICER AND 24 MEN. ON THE ROOF WAS A 24 POUNDER CANNON WHICH COULD TRAVERSE A FULL CIRCLE. ENOUGH SUPPLIES WERE CONTAINED TO WITHSTAND A SIEGE.

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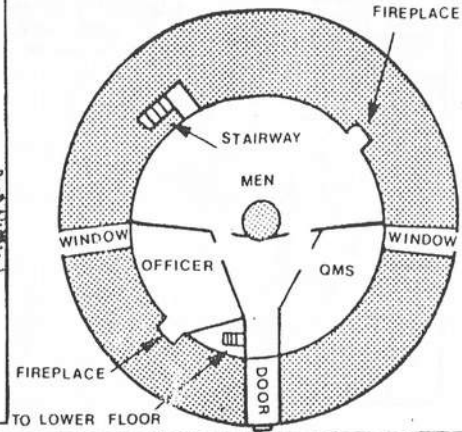
Section through a Martello Tower

MOST MARTELLO TOWERS WERE OF SIMILAR MEASUREMENTS—33 FT. HIGH, AND WALLS 13 FT. THICK AT THE BASE ON THE SEAWARD SIDE, TAPERING TO 6 OR 8 FT AT THE TOP. ENTRANCE WAS THROUGH A DOOR 20 FT. FROM THE GROUND WITH A RETRACTABLE LADDER



AT PEVENSY BAY, A SHIP WOULD HAVE BEEN IN RANGE OF NO LESS THAN 15 MARTELLO TOWERS.

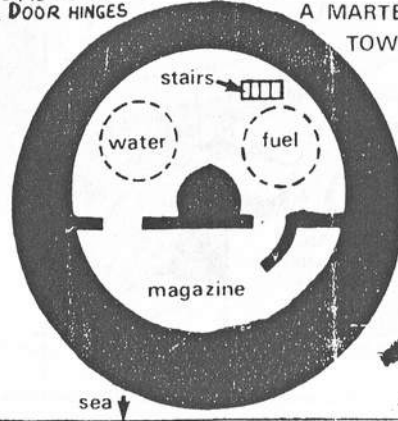
First floor plan of a typical Martello Tower



THE GROUND FLOOR CONTAINED THE POWDER MAGAZINE AND THE STORES. TO AVOID SPARKS AS LITTLE METAL AS POSSIBLE WAS USED IN ITS CONSTRUCTION. DOOR HINGES AND LATCH WERE MADE OF COPPER. HALF A TON OF POWDER WAS CONTAINED IN THE MAGAZINE



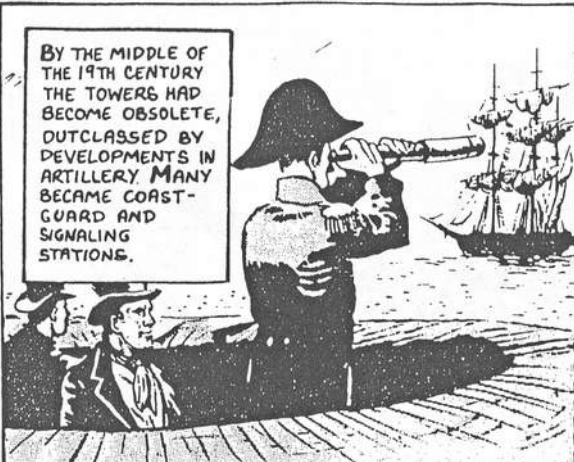
GROUND FLOOR PLAN OF A MARTELLO TOWER



NELSON'S VICTORY AT TRAFALGAR IN 1805 ENDED FOR EVER NAPOLEON'S DREAM OF INVASION, BUT THE MARTELLO TOWERS CONTINUED TO BE BUILT. BY 1812, 103 TOWERS HAD BEEN COMPLETED, INCLUDING A LINE ALONG THE EAST COAST.



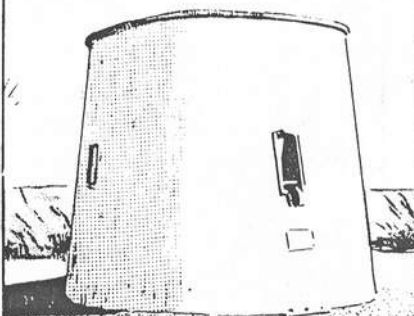
BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY THE TOWERS HAD BECOME OBSOLETE, OUTCLASSED BY DEVELOPMENTS IN ARTILLERY. MANY BECAME COAST-GUARD AND SIGNALING STATIONS.



IN 1940, ENGLAND WAS AGAIN FACED WITH INVASION. THE MARTELLO TOWERS WERE MANNED ONCE AGAIN. SOME WERE USED AS OBSERVATION POSTS AND SOME EVEN HAD GUNS MOUNTED IN THEM.



MARTELLO TOWER NO. 24 AT DYMCHURCH.



OF THE 26 TOWERS BUILT IN KENT, ONLY 16 ARE STILL STANDING.

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