

In view of all this naval activity it is hardly surprising that the Canadian government invested large amounts of money in building a network of fortifications surrounding Sydney harbour. Lingan Battery was constructed in 1940 by J.P. Porter and Sons at a cost of approximately \$200,000 (including land and services). Petrie Battery was built by E.G.M. Cape and Company in 1939-40 at a cost of \$105,000. Stubberts and South Bar Batteries were built in 1942 by M.R. Chappell, a local company, at a cost of \$112,000. The Fire Command Post at Kilkenny was built in 1951-2 by M.R. Chappell for \$97,000, plus another \$10,000 for later work. Chapel Point was built by E.G.M. Cape in 1940 at a cost of \$150,000, and Oxford Battery was built in 1943 by E.G.M. Cape at a cost of \$1.2 million.³⁹

Anti-submarine nets were installed in July 1940. The work was done under private contract and the nets were supplemented by extensive rock and gravel fills extending toward the shore from either end. The next year anti-torpedo nets were laid directly behind and parallel to the anti-submarine nets in order to give complete protection to the port, which by that time had become an important convoy assembly point.⁴⁰

These fortifications were intended to protect the mines, the steel plant, the naval ships resting at the Point Edward naval base and, of course, the ships gathering into convoys. Eight fortifications were built, ranging from Glace Bay around the harbour to Alder Point and their guns had a range of up to twenty-one miles. Hundreds of men served in these installations, and the last--Fort Petrie at New Victoria--did not officially close until 1956.

Sydney harbour has played a significant, though generally forgotten, role in the coastal defences of Atlantic Canada for many years. Because of the low priority given to defence expenditures by successive Canadian governments since the Second World War, despite the emphasis placed on developing a powerful submarine force by the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War years, coastal defence facilities were particularly ignored. Thus, the fortifications ringing Sydney harbour were stripped and allowed to deteriorate, to the point where they now are in ruins and constitute a growing danger to anyone trespassing on the sites, sad though somewhat romantic reminders of a more heroic past. Happily, however, a group of local citizens has been formed with a view to preserving and restoring at least one of them, the Chapel Point site in Sydney Mines, in an effort to remind people of Sydney harbour's important contribution to our naval and military history.

Like the Fortress of Louisbourg, these sites speak not only of Cape Breton's local history but of its strategic role in guarding the Gulf entrance to Canada and particularly its essential contribution to the two greatest conflicts in the history of mankind. Like Louisbourg, they remind us that great global struggles can and have come very close to home. Unlike Louisbourg, they remind us of a conflict, World War II, that may seem more relevant both because of the issues at stake and because so many who participated in it are still with us.

NOTES

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1. C. Bruce Fergusson (ed.), *Uniacke's Sketches of Cape Breton and Other Papers* (Halifax, 1958),

reprinted in Brian Douglas Tennyson (ed.), *Impressions of Cape Breton* (Sydney, 1986), 56.

2. Public Archives of Nova Scotia (hereafter PANS), Map Collection, REO S.4, Edward Walker, "Sketch of the Harbour of Sydney," 30 November 1848.