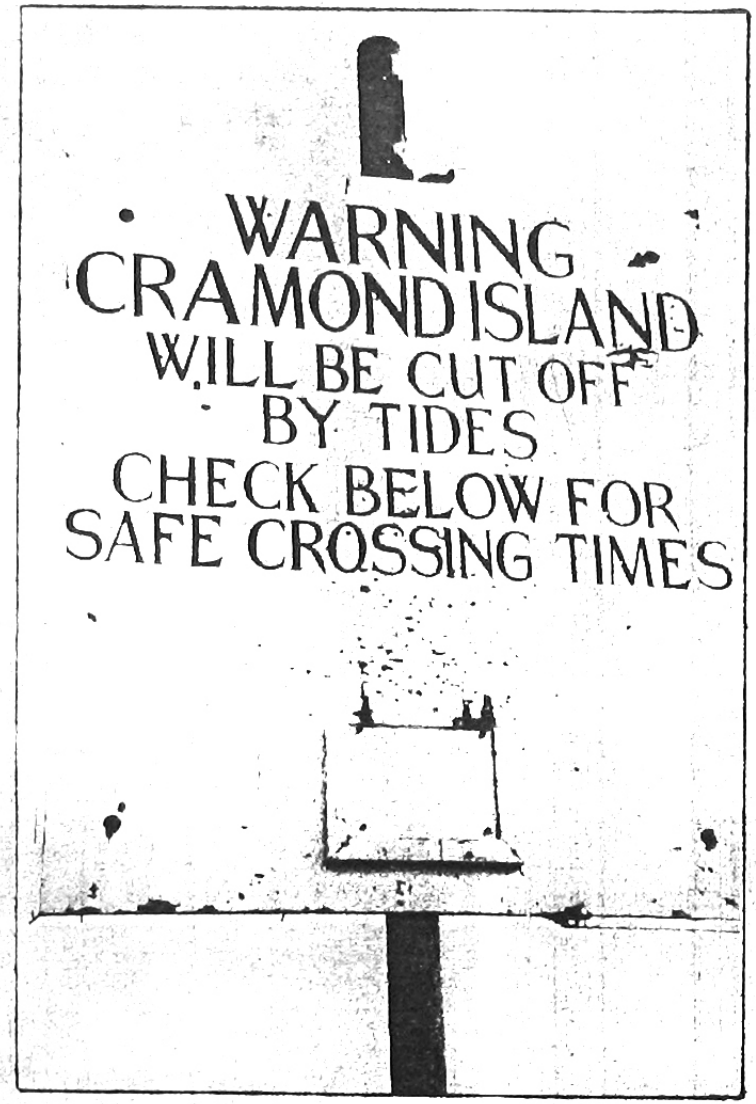


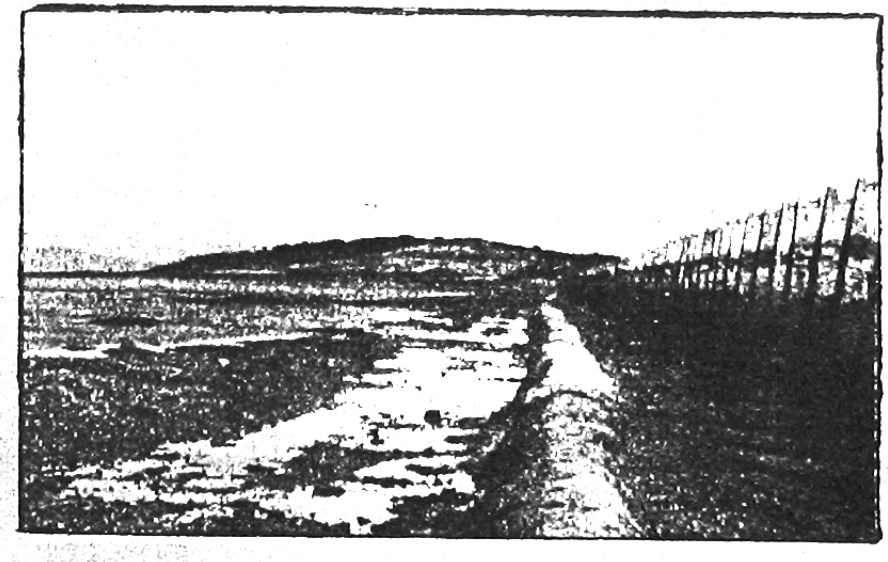
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THE little Jewels

Fidra, Craigleith, Lamb, Cramond and Inchmickery



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Fidra

The island of Fidra lies two miles north-west of the town of North Berwick, offshore from Dirleton Castle. It rises to a height of 111 ft (34m) above the sea and is connected to the mainland by a rocky ridge known as The Bridge. On this ridge stands the remains of the oldest structure on the island thought to have been a hermitage or "desert" connected with the old Cistercian nunnery at North Berwick, the ruins of which stand a little to the south-west of the town.

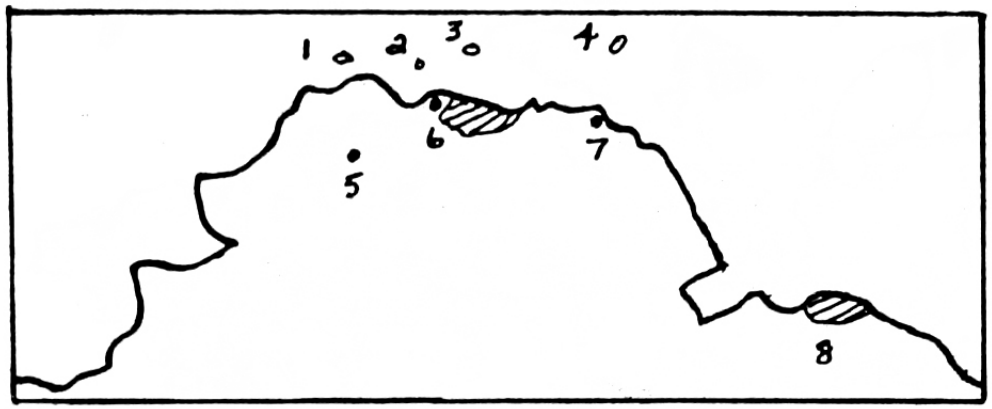
This nunnery is believed to have been founded by Duncan Earl of Fife (died in 1154) and dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In time it became quite prosperous, containing up to 22 nuns and possessing lands in Fife, Berwick, Ayr, Edinburgh and Roxburgh. The nuns also enjoyed the patronage of many churches, two of which were at North Berwick and Largo in Fife. A record of about the year 1207 shows the North Berwick convent to consist of Black Nuns.

When the Scots were defeated by Edward I at Dunbar in 1296 the Mother Superior swore allegiance to the English king in order that the nunnery and its Fidra connection could continue to hold their lands. They seem to have been able to do so until the reign of James III (1460-88) when they were deprived of some of their rights and possessions. In 1482 the nunnery petitioned Parliament for the protection and repair of damaged property which was duly carried out.

In the early 16th century the nunnery and the Fidra hermitage were held by the Homes of Polwarth. Margaret, a daughter of Sir Patrick Home, was a nun in the convent and eventually became Mother Superior. She was succeeded by her niece, Isabella, until after the Reformation when James VI erected the Home properties into a temporal lordship and granted it to Sir Alexander Home of North Berwick.

A lighthouse was first erected on Fidra in 1885. The site for it was only obtained after a case before the Court of Session. A claim for compensation for damage to property was made by the Dirleton estate, of which the island was a part, but the Court dismissed it and the Commissioners for the Northern Lighthouses were given permission to erect a lighthouse on the island.

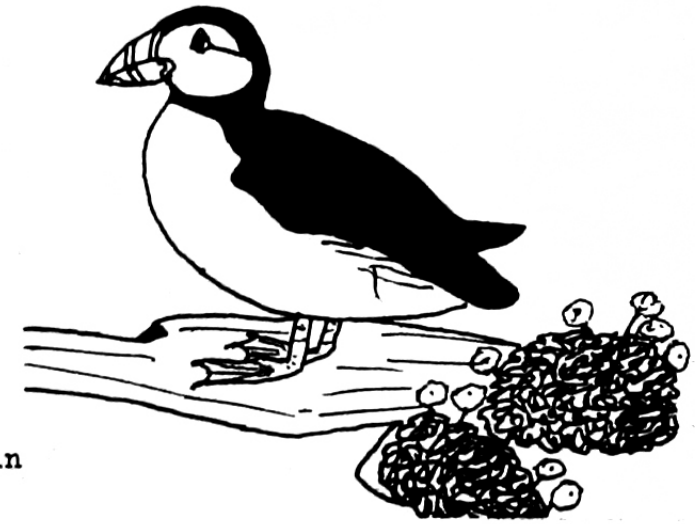
By 1910 Fidra was one of the only two lights in the Northern Lighthouse Service which had not been converted to the dioptric, or lens, system, but it achieved fame in October 1970 when it was made all-electric and was the first lighthouse in the Service to be fully automatic. It produces a light of 460,000 candlepower which flashes white every 15 seconds and is visible for up to 16 miles. It is connected to the electricity mains by undersea cables and the lighthouse at St. Abb's Head can check that the Fidra light is operating correctly. A further check can be made by telephone with other lighthouses within sight of Fidra. In April 1971 the lightkeepers were withdrawn and now a boatman from North Berwick attends to the maintenance of the light. Fidra can be visited by boat from North Berwick during the summer months.



scale approx. 1 : 250,000

1. Fidra
2. The Lamb
3. Craigleith
4. Bass Rock
5. Dirleton Castle
6. North Beriwck
7. Tantallon Castle
8. Dunbar

N



puffin

Craigleith and Lamb

Craigleith is a small island about one mile north of North Berwick and 2½ miles west of the Bass Rock. It has steep sides and rises to a height of 168 ft (51m) above sea level. Its associate island, The Lamb, lies mid-way between Craigleith and Fidra and reaches a height of 79 ft (24m) above the sea.

These two islands have been by-passed by history so there is no great story attached to them. At one time Craigleith was attached to the parish of North Berwick and the Town Council sold it to the Dalrymple family for £400. Towards the end of the 18th century it was part of the parish of Dirleton but a century later it belonged to North Berwick.

The Lamb is recorded as being part of Dirleton parish and both islands are now deserted and the haunt of seabirds and rabbits, with nothing at all outstanding about them. In recent years, however, Craigleith has played a significant part in the tremendous increase in the number of puffins in Britain. In 1889 the island had only 25 pairs of these birds but by 1978 there were no less than 1500 nests there. Some of the other remote islands in the Firth of Forth have also played an important part in the increase in puffins; the Isle of May had 5 pairs in 1959 and 10,000 pairs in 1982. Inchkeith did not have any puffins until 1965 while Fidra's puffin colony has only been in existence since 1967. By 1978 the total number on both Inchkeith and Fidra had reached 1100.

Cramond Island

Cramond is thought to be derived from the Celtic words "caer" meaning "fort" and "amon" meaning "river" - The Fort on the River. Its earliest inhabitant is said to have been St. Adamnan, who supposedly had a small base on the island. There are two saints of this name, both of whom lived in the 7th century, and opinion is divided as to which of them had a connection with Cramond. Adamnan of Iona is famous for his biography of St. Columba, who has traditional connections with ~~the island of~~ Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth. It is believed by many that Adamnan came with him and established a solitary base on Cramond Island. He is also supposed to have travelled to Northumbria to request the release of some captives and he may have stopped off at Cramond for a while.

The other Adamnan was a monk at the monastery of Coldingham at St. Abb's Head. He is most famous for foretelling the destruction of the monastery by fire. His nomination for the patronage of Cramond Island rests on the fact that Coldingham is closer to Cramond than Iona is.

This entire period of the island's history is based solely on traditional tales. There are no records of these times in connection with the island and there are no surviving structures of an early date. In fact the island's history does not begin properly until the 12th century, some 500 years later.

The island lies about one mile north-east of Cramond village and is only an island at high tide, being connected to the mainland by a long stretch of sand known as Drum Sands. It is almost triangular in shape, is about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile long from north to south and the surface area covers 19 acres. While the history of Cramond village can be traced back to Roman times (several relics of the occupying forces have been found there) the history of the island is sketchy with large

gaps between recorded events. It is not known whether the island was used by the Romans but several historians have doubted that it was on account of its being tidal and thus vulnerable to attack from the shore.

The earliest records for the island date back only to early medieval times when it belonged to the diocese of Dunkeld. Between 1181 and 1185 it was granted by the Bishop of Dunkeld to the Priory of Inchcolm, with the condition that Dunkeld could continue to hold an interest in the island by renting it for an annual sum. This state of affairs, however, led to a quarrel between Dunkeld and Inchcolm and Pope Innocent III had to order an inquiry into the dispute to find a peaceful agreement. The outcome is not known for certain but the Inchcolm monks must either have lost the feu or the two parties came to a mutual agreement for the island (called the Isle of Leverith at this time) which for a long time continued to be linked with Dunkeld.

In the early 16th century the island was famed for its oyster beds and the shells were gathered and burned for their lime. There are entries in the Rentals of Dunkeld Abbey for the transportation of the lime from kilns on the Cramond foreshore to Dunkeld.

In 1632 a ferryboat on the Queensferry crossing was wrecked on Cramond Island with the loss of all lives on board. In the same year another ferryboat was driven onto Inchgarvie island but in this case only cargo and luggage were lost. The accidents were not due to bad weather but to the inexperience of the helmsmen.

The island is known to have been inhabited in the 18th century and, in a wooded hollow near the centre of the island stand the ruins of a dwelling which may date from this time. By the end of that century, however, the island's oyster beds were much depleted through overfishing. In the 1740s 11 large boats from Cramond fished for oysters, most of which were sold to Dutch ships at the rate of 4s per barrel. It was estimated that five men in a boat could earn up to 30s (£1.50) a day and be kept busy



Cramond Island at low tide



Ruined cottage on Cramond Island

constantly. By 1795, however, the story had changed. Only four or five boats were operating and only on an occasional basis. The marked decline in the oysters was considered to be a major contributing factor in the decline of the local population at the time. Lime for manure was no longer obtained from Cramond oysters but was brought in from other areas in Midlothian.

The island was originally part of the Barnton estate and towards the end of the 18th century the owner, Mr. Ramsay of Barnton, granted free pasturage on the island to the British Wool Company. A century later it was in the possession of the Earl of Roseberry. It was fortified in this century during both World Wars and the remains of gun emplacements still dot the surface today.

Cramond Island can be reached at low tide by a "causeway" which is really just the cement casing over a sewage pipe running from the shore below the village out towards the island. At the landward end of this causeway a large board displays the tide times so that visitors know how long they can spend on the island. The walk along the causeway is in the main straightforward but the cement path is broken in places allowing pools of seawater to accumulate. Waterproof footwear, therefore, is advisable although the path is for the most part dry and firm.

Running parallel to the causeway is a line of tall, concrete-coated pillars - the remains of a wartime bridge for transporting ammunition to the island batteries.

Inchmickery

The tiny island of Inchmickery lies mid-way between the islands of Cramond and Inchcolm, about 1¼ miles from either. It is rocky, without hardly a flat area, and rises to a height of 48 ft (almost 15m) above sea level. Its name is a curious one; the "Inch" means "island" but the rest has had two different suggested derivations. One is "bhicaire" meaning "vicar". It has been suggested that the island once had ecclesiastical connections and that a Canon or Abbot of Inchcolm had a residence here. The other possible origin is "mic" - son, "ri" - king, leading to the title "Island of the Son of the King". This would mean that the island's name is derived from a son of Alexander I (1107 - 1124) who was drowned just off Inchmickery.

This rocky outcrop in the Forth has always been famous for its natural history. In the early 16th century the vast oyster beds around the island afforded a good source of lime but, due to over-exploitation, these shellfish suffered a marked decline in the 18th century. In the 1790s the shell beds had returned (although not to the extent that there was an abundance) and Lady Greenwich who owned the island then leased the beds to the fishermen of Newhaven for the annual sum of £24. Towards the end of the 19th century, however, the island is once more noted for its oyster beds as well as the many varieties of lichens, mosses and seaweeds to be found there.

In more modern times the island has become an important bird sanctuary, especially for the roseate tern, a colony of which is now well-established there. This means that landing is prohibited, the only persons allowed to visit being members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. They make trips there at certain times of the year to check on the progress of the colony and to remove the eggs of other birds such as the herring- and black-headed gulls in order to keep enough space for the terns.

From a distance Inchmickery resembles a large battleship on account of its heavy concentration of derelict defences

from World War II. There is hardly an island in the Forth which was not fortified in one or both World Wars, and Inchmickery was important for this purpose because of its location in the middle of the estuary.

The original soldiers on the island in 1939 were largely from a territorial regiment from Edinburgh. They manned the battery (called Mick) and came under the jurisdiction of the "Fire Commander" who was based on Inchcolm. The guns were 6 pounders and amidst the heavy concentration of buildings a bright London Lieutenant proposed the construction (by the troops) of a tennis court!

Close to the island is a group of rocks which, from a distance, resemble a surfaced submarine. These rocks are known as The Cow and Calves or the Mickery Stone and bear a monolith thought to be a neolithic standing stone.



The tarmaced road eventually connects with the footpath near the wooded area and a narrower path runs off round the eastern side of the island. Following this narrow trail one can discern clearly the lines of the old walls criss--crossing the surface. This path terminates back at the starting point at The Knoll.

THE QUALITY OF LIFE ON CRAMOND- Reminicences of Mr. James T. Potter, who served on Cramond and other Forth islands in World War II.

There were two batteries on the island - Cram and Dalmeny - and the original 1939 soldiers, as on Inchcolm, Inchmickery and Inchkeith, were largely from a territorial regiment from Edinburgh. The guns were at instant readiness during fog and darkness, and night routine varied from 10.30pm to 4.00am in June and 4.00pm to 8,30am in winter. There was no A.A. defence and the "medico" was an Aberdeen bus conduc--tor! Only two women (NAAFI staff) were based on the island.

The batteries were serviced with piped water from the main--land, coke fires, eletric light and modern wooden huts.

Life revolved around the "opening of the tide", i.e. when the sands were exposed, and all leave and transport arrange--ments hinged on this. On exceptional occasions (gales, etc.) when the tide failed to "open" all was thrown out of gear.

Remembered with gratitude are the ENSA concert parties and army film shows, who would perform before and after midnight in order that both gun watches could attend.

Troops might arrive on the foreshore late at night waiting for the tide. Sam Proudfoot, father of the present "Mine Host" of Cramond Inn, and Charlie Bailey, whose cart took food and provisions to the Island, would shelter them in comfort.

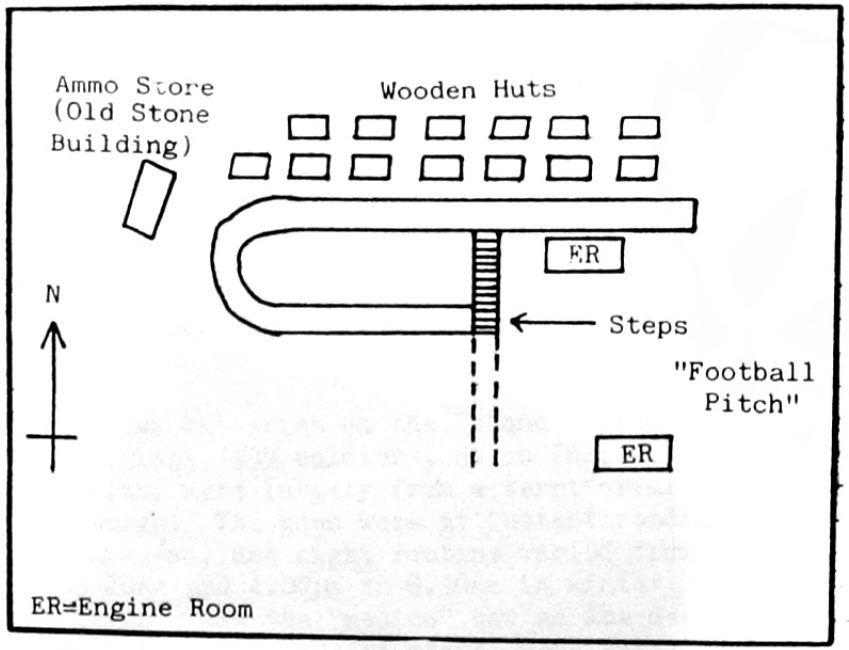
Walking over the sands, perhaps at night in the black-out, had its perils, such as drifting into the mud of the River Almond, or finding that the tide was apparenly rising (the wind could sweep water through from east to west to give a false idea, or even the sporting chance of being fired at by a sentry!

CONCLUSION

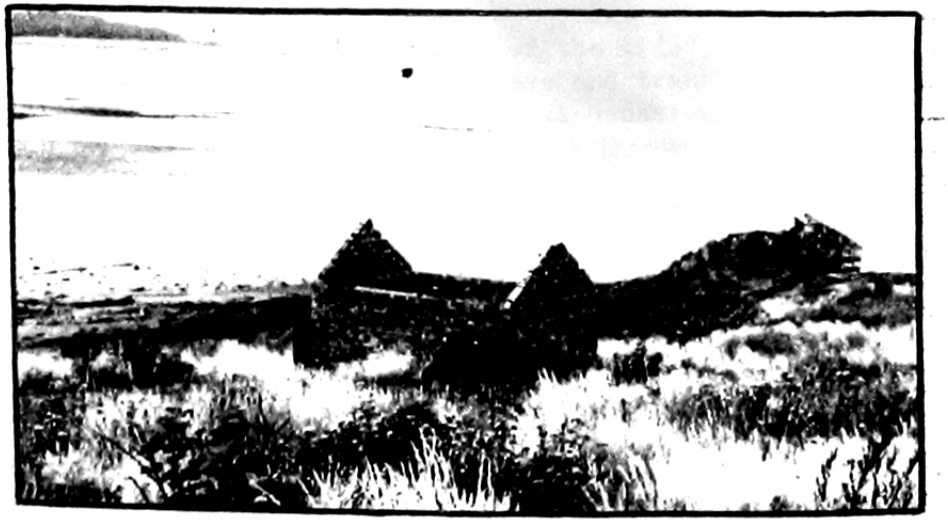
Cramond contrasts with the other Forth islands in that it has trees. All the others, with the exception of Inchcolm which has had a few trees introduced, are totally devoid of these. The trees on Cramond Island consist mainly of elder and sycamore, while the low vegetation is made up of long grasses, bracken, nettles, brambles and thistles. There is quite an abundance of wild flowers but a notable lack of animal life. Seabirds are, of course, numerous and include oyster-catchers, black-headed gulls, herring gulls and terns. The trees on the island afford a habitat for blackbirds, thrushes and woodpigeons.

There are several small sandy bays around the island and many seashells are washed up including mussels, whelks, gapers and oysters. Although the oyster beds disappeared at one time due to over-exploitation, the signs now are that they may be returning. The dominant shellfish is, however, the mussel in large beds on the mudflats.

The little island presents an ideal away-from-it-all venue for a picnic trip on a nice day where one can feel totally isolated in the midst of natural surroundings, despite the fact that the smokey city of Edinburgh is in full view a short distance to the east.



Lay-out of World War II buildings at north end of the island, from a sketch-plan by Mr. J. Potter, Broughty Ferry.



Second World War buildings on the island's western shore

The first feature met upon arriving on the island is a World War IIbattery situated on a rocky outcrop known as The Knoll (but called The Pinnacle in earlier times). Indeed, the island is strewn with the derelict shells of military defences and batteries, which housed 12 and 6 pound guns, and a French "75".

A footpath, originally a concrete roadway which has become very overgrown, leads off from the little beach below The Knoll and circles the island in a clockwise direction. A short distance from the shore this path leads into a wooded area in which stands a ruined cottage, possibly of late 18th century date. The walls are intact but the roof has fallen in and whole or broken pantiles lie scattered around the walls. During World War II this served as a storeroom for equipment.

Beyond the wood the path emerges onto a flat area at the north end of the island at a point known as the Binks. On this flat ground and on a lower nearer the sea stand several military buildings of both World Wars. The block-shaped buildings near the top and at the foot of the steps were World War II engine-rooms, whose main purpose was to service four or five searchlights. The steps themselves were actually built by Sergeant "Tam" Melrose in 1940.

From here a good view can be had of Inchmickery, with its heavy cluster of wartime defences.

Following the tarmaced road west, one soon sees the roofless ruin of a brick-built building and, beyond it near the shore, a stone-built ruin "propped up" against an outcrop of rock. This latter structure looks older than the military buildings elsewhere on the island, but the interior has been lined with cement. During the last War it was used as an ammunition store.

Both the western and northern shores of the island bear the remains of landing stages and slipways.