

# THE KANGAROO BLUFF BATTERY

by

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The view of the River Derwent is spectacular. The site of the Kangaroo Bluff Battery is a gem of the municipality of Clarence. Open to the public in the day time, its construction was completed in 1884 in response to two Russian vessels seen in the Derwent River several years before. This gave way to fears of a possible Russian invasion. The idea was to blow the enemy vessels out of the water before they could shell Hobart.

The fort (or battery) was constructed from solid stone and faced with masonry and includes underground passages which housed the magazines, stores, the lamp room and loading galleries to the huge guns erected. Speaking tubes were set into the walls for communication purposes. A highlight was the two 8 inch Armstrong guns beside the Nordenfelt rapid fire guns.



The moat that surrounded the battery is still there, without the water. A long time ago a 12 year old boy tragically drowned in it, prompting its draining.

The fort was manned by local militia and of course was never used in anger. Come federation in 1901 the site was passed to the Federal Government.



In 1870 British forces left Tasmania with the defence of the colony now the responsibility of the Tasmanian Government. In 1881 steps were taken to build a fort on the eastern shore to Hobart which lay across the River Derwent.

The heavy guns arrived from London on the vessel *Lufra* to Hobart on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1882. Each weighed 14 tons and had a length of 20 feet. Placed on board the *PS Kangaroo* they were ferried to the Bellerive Wharf. Twelve horses took to pull them up Crown Street to the fort.

They were not mounted until 1884 and in 1885 rifled muzzle loading eighty pounders were placed on each flank of the fort. On the 12<sup>th</sup> February 1885 the first shot was witnessed by the local residents. The following year a permanent artillery group, Southern Artillery, was formed. The group was disbanded in 1904. In 1888 a Norenfel gun which was a small quick fire weapon was added on an emplacement.

In 1903 the Commonwealth Government took over the defence of Australia with the Kangaroo Bluff Battery being used as a signal station during WWI. In 1920 the Commonwealth Government dismantled the guns and destroyed the turntables. In 1930 the Clarence Council took over the area as a public park becoming a state reserve in 1971. It is now managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service.