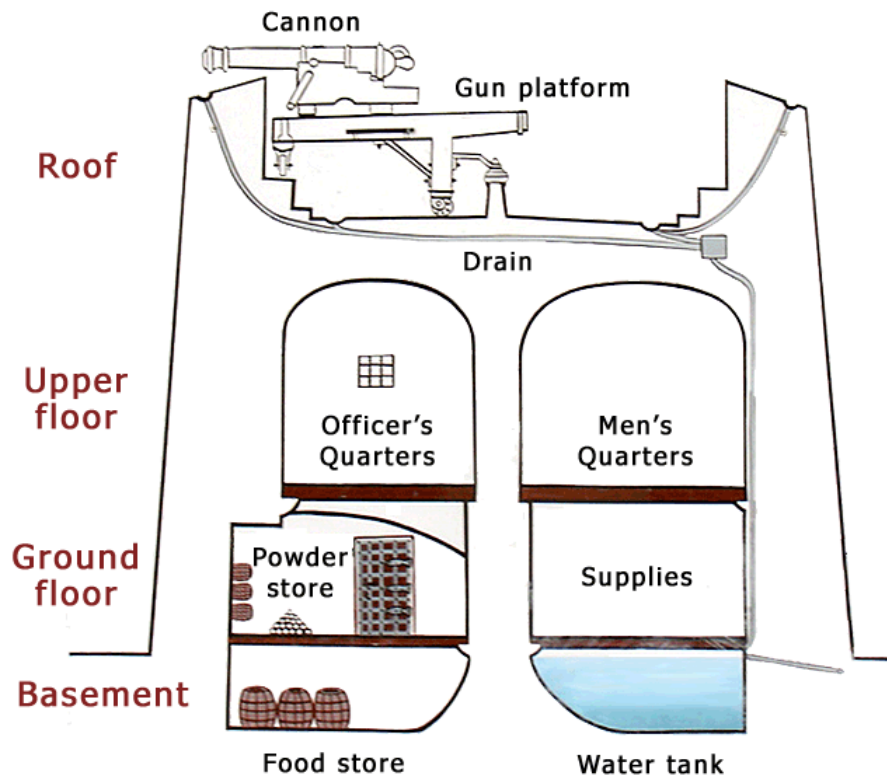


What is a Martello Tower?

Martello Towers are gun towers built to defend the South Eastern coast of England against the threat of invasion across the English Channel by Napoleonic forces from France.



They were built in two phases between 1805-1810 along the coasts of Kent and East Sussex and between 1808-1812 along the coasts of Essex and Suffolk.

The Towers take the form of compact, free-standing, circular buildings on three levels built of rendered brick. As can be seen above, the ground floor was used for storage with further essential supplies of food and water often being stored in a basement below.

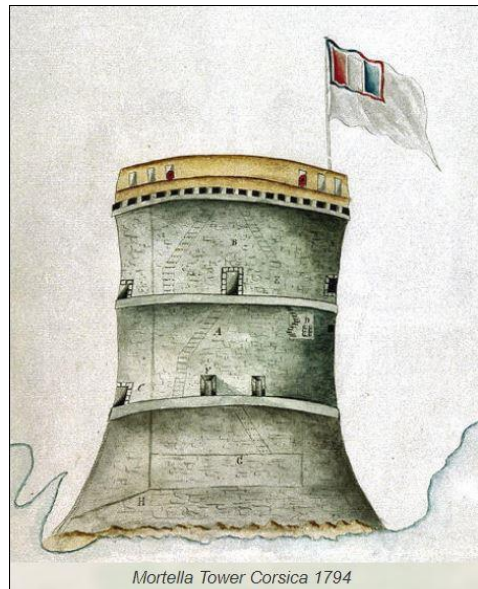
The Towers are around 40 feet high and 45 feet wide at the base. The walls can be up to 13 feet thick on the seaward side. The entrance door could be up to 12 feet above the ground and entered by ladder (or drawbridge where some Towers are surrounded by a high protective wall and moat).

The main accommodation for the garrison was provided on the first floor with Officers getting much more space than the common soldier. There might be one or two Officers with around 15 to 20 men.

The main gun platform was on the roof with the cannon capable of firing a 24-pound cannonball for up to a mile.

There were 103 Martello Towers built with a concentration in the most vulnerable areas. Folkestone had 4 Towers; Sandgate 5 Towers (plus one erected inside Sandgate Castle); and Kent overall had 27.

The name Martello is an English adaptation of the word Mortella, the latter being a promontory in Corsica where, in 1794, the French forces resisted attacks from the sea due to the fine construction of a tower. When captured from the land the British brought back the tower's design and something similar was then incorporated into the relatively standard design of the Martello Tower.



The French were defeated firstly at sea and then on land, so these English Towers were never tested in war. As artillery fire subsequently became more powerful, they were considered redundant. However, in the two World Wars many were used for military purposes.

Today, many low-lying Towers have been swept away by the sea and many others demolished. They are now given the protected status of Grade 2 listed buildings or scheduled monuments and Historic England (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>) provides details of every Tower on their website.

The locations of the 27 Martello Towers in Kent are identified by numbers of the Towers on the 1867 map below:

