



## Past Projects

# Chavonnes Battery

The Chavonnes Battery (previously known as the Waterkasteel, Groote Battery, Mauritz Battery) was built between 1714 and 1725 at the instigation of Governor Pasque De Chavonnes. He considered Table Bay to be poorly defended and ordered the construction of a large fortification on a promontory of land extending into Table Bay. The Battery, armed with heavy cannons was ideally positioned to defend the Table Bay anchorage. Besides being a defensive facility, the Battery served as an outpost, a prison and a slave lodge throughout the DEIC occupation. Its one time commander was Estienne Barbier who led a freeburgher revolt after which he was hung, drawn and quartered at Gallows Hill. When the British took over the Cape in 1806, the Battery was repaired and continued to serve in a defensive role. In 1860 work began on the construction of the Alfred Basin immediately behind the Chavonnes Battery. The last military act of the fortification was to fire the 21 gun salute when Prince Alfred inaugurated construction of the breakwater. Historic records imply that the Battery was demolished shortly after this time and its cannons sold to the Harbour board for mooring ships.

In January 1999 the ACO was commissioned by the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront Company to conduct a program of trial excavations in an industrial area of the harbour that was undergoing redevelopment. The target area, where the Battery was thought to have existed, was under a fish meal factory, just to the north of the Alfred Basin. Working under difficult conditions, the ACO team broke through the concrete floors of the working factory and identified 18th century fabric. Hereafter began an extensive archaeological excavation and a radical revision of the development plans. The work entailed using an array of technology to expose the site ranging from conventional archaeological techniques, ground penetrating radar to heavy machinery and explosives. Although much of the Battery had been

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demolished, a large portion of it had survived buried under land reclamation on which the fish meal factory had been built.

After demolition of the fish factory, the entire remaining extent of the Chavonnes Battery was excavated and then conserved in an underground area under the BOE building at the Clock tower in the Waterfront. The exposed portion is a massively built structure consisting of a seaward rampart wall under which are the remains of 4 casemate rooms. Also revealed is a courtyard with a well. Both the well and the courtyard contain a rich sequence of historical archaeological material dating from the early – mid 18th century. The battery is now an artillery [museum](#) that is a popular venue for hosting special events, and is well worth a visit in its own right.



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