

Martello Towers – Thickness of the Walls

Martello Towers are some 33 ft (10 m) tall and tapered so that on the seaward side the walls vary in thickness from 14 ft (4m) at the base to 6 ft (1.8 m) at parapet level. To increase their ability to withstand bombardment, the bricks were bedded in hot lime mortar - a mixture of lime, ash and hot tallow.

When Martello Tower No.23 in Dymchurch was being converted to a residential property, a new entrance on the ground floor was made.

The photo below is of the hole that was made in the sea facing wall for the new entrance, and gives a good idea of the thickness of the walls.



New entrance being made in the seaward side of Martello Tower No.23 in 1989

Guy Ruddy, Owner of Martello23 says:

The Tower wall here is at it's thickest - 14 feet but a magazine for storing gunpowder and cannonballs, which is a small room is built into the wall on the inside extending 7 feet - so the opening I made was only 7 feet.

A pneumatic drill and compressor was used to create this doorway. It took 2 weeks to drill through the wall to create the opening which was eventually bricked up to create a doorway using similar reclaimed brick. 15 tons of rubble came from this opening and was then spread inside the tower to raise up the vaulted ground floor level. Because the mortar is tallow and lime which is incredibly hard only 3 original brick could be saved from the drilling.

Two further holes were drilled using the same method - however these had to be reinstated due to the work being carried out without scheduled monument consent.

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