

As part of this years Cork Harbour festival 3-11 June, Elizabeth fort has been included in the Harbour Festival programme.

The history of Elizabeth Fort has strong links to all things maritime and some of these major connections are outlined here.

The very conception and building of the fort was in response to the threat of attack, with a large element of this threat being from the sea. The fort was first built in 1601 as part of a series of forts with a view to protecting the coastline of the south of Ireland. The fort on Haulbowline Island in Cork Harbour, as well as James' Fort in Kinsale was also built as part of this project.

There was a major attack on Cork City and Elizabeth Fort in 1690, the Siege of Cork, and a large proportion of the invasion force arrived by sea. In advance of the attack, half of the Williamite forces, around 5,000 troops, left Portsmouth in a fleet of ships. The fleet sailed into Cork Harbour where the troops disembarked at Passage West; they then marched to the city to attack. A few days later, large siege guns were brought up to the city by river and these guns assured the taking of the Cork City and Elizabeth Fort by the Williamites.

For most of the nineteenth century, Elizabeth Fort housed a major army barracks. This was a time when Cork was a major port in the provisioning of the British Navy and the soldiers based in Elizabeth Fort were vital in the protection of Britain's interests in Cork at that time.

During the period of 1817 to 1837, Elizabeth Fort was used as a Convict Depot as part of the process of penal transportation. The Fort was a temporary holding depot for prisoners who had been sentenced and were awaiting the next ship to leave from Cork Harbour, in most cases, bound for New South Wales in Australia.

'Point of no Return'



For this years Cork Harbour Festival, a nautical theme flag has been designed and created by artist Sean Hanrahan. The design is based on Streamers (the red segment of the flag) which could be found on the foremasts of old world sailing ships. The White on Blue square represents, in modern nautical terms, the Naval signal flag 'P' as in *Papa*. When this signal flag is hoisted on a ship in Harbour it means: Ship is about to sail. We can take this as a reference to the above mentioned convicts held in the Elizabeth Fort to await deportation. Many if not all of them would never again return to Ireland.

Sean Hanrahan is a Cork based Artist and member of the Backwater Artist group. He is also crew member of Meitheal Mara's Flagship boat 'FionnBarra' which will participate in this years Ocean to City race as part of the Cork Harbour Festival.

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