Lyttelton Harbour – Defence Positions

Ripapa Island – Fort Jervois

1. **Submarine Mining Depot -**
   A submarine mining depot was included in the 1885 construction plans for Fort Jervois, but the depot's buildings but were never used for its intended purpose. They were used instead to house the convict labour responsible for constructing the Fort. As originally conceived, the depot comprised a Torpedo shed, mine store, cable tank, workshop, and primer test pit. Strangely, a torpedo boat shed and slipway were not included among the planned structures but were built near Lyttelton at Magazine Bay below Erskine Point.

2. The guns installed in 1886 at Fort Jervois were 2 x 8in Breech Loading guns and 2 x 6in Breech Loading disappearing guns. The Fort is in pristine condition and is managed by the Department of Conservation.
Fort Jervois

6 inch BL Disappearing Gun
8 inch Breech Loading Gun

Battery Point -

In 1885, two x 7inch 7 ton rifle muzzle loading guns and one x 6 pounder Nordenfelt gun were installed.

7in 7 ton RML Gun
Battery Point is the only site in Canterbury where coastal defence structures were set up to protect the country against three different threats of invasion, during the 1880s Russian scare, World War I and World War II. From the 1880s this site was recognised as a key position to guard the inner approach to Lyttelton harbour, with the guns emplaced here to function in conjunction with those on Ripapa Island. Both sites were re-commissioned during the two world wars as the inner harbour's principal defence.

6 pounder Nordenfelt gun

Spur Point -

One x 64 pounder RML gun installed in 1885. The site of the battery was quarried away for land reclamation to build Cashin Quay in the 1970s. This is where the container ships and cruise liners now tie up.

64 pounder gun
Cashin Quay

Erskine Point

1. **Gun Batteries** – one x 64 pounder gun was installed in 1885 and a 7inch 7 ton RML gun installed in 1891.

7inch 7 ton RML gun from Erskine Point now sited at Sumner Sea Cadets
2. Torpedo Depot and Boat -

The Government steamer Stella towed the torpedo boat Defender from Port Chalmers and the two vessels arrived at Lyttelton 24 December 1884. However, there were still no facilities available for the Defender and she had to remain in the water alongside the wharf.

Stella

Defender alongside wharf at Lyttelton
Facilities for the **Defender** were completed in 1885 with the construction of a boat shed and slipway at Magazine Bay below Erskine Point. The five crew members for the boat were originally Torpedo Corps professionals who maintained their boat in a seaworthy condition. However, by 1892 the Torpedo Corps in Lyttelton had become a band of amateurs consisting of butchers, bakers, blacksmiths, etc, with a civilian engineer contracted to maintain the boat and act as chief engineer. Unfortunately, it would appear that the boat had not been adequately maintained and the contractor was discharged for allowing the boat to become “unseaworthy”. The problems were compounded by the fact that the plans for the construction of the slipway were not adhered to and ended up too short to allow proper launching and recovery of the boat.

**Torpedo Boat Depot, Magazine Bay**

**Defender** spent most of her service life moored in the harbour near the dry-dock facilities. The boat was finally laid up in 1899 and bought by a local steam launch operator who salvaged all the machinery out of it and left the hull to rot at Purau Bay. The remains of the torpedo boat are now on display at the Lyttelton Torpedo Boat Museum which is in the historic magazine building at Magazine Bay.

**Mine-laying Steamers**

As a contribution to port defences the government ordered a small "submining" steamer from Scotland. It was shipped to Wellington for assembly in sections, fitted with a locally made engine, named **Ellen Ballance**, and went into service about 1884. She was put under the responsibility of army engineers, who gained Engineer Corp status in May 1887.

Submarine mining was the laying of defensive mines on the seabed about port entrances. In 1898 the New Zealand forces commander advised the government that **Ellen Ballance** was dangerous for laying out mines in anything approaching bad weather. The vessel was only a launch and totally unsuitable for the task.
The commander recommended that two "proper" submarine minelaying steamers should be acquired, one for Auckland and one for Wellington. This was approved, and in October 1900 the construction of two larger vessels were ordered. These were named Janie Seddon and Lady Roberts.

Ellen Ballance went to Lyttelton soon after being replaced by Janie Seddon in 1902, and then to Otago Harbour in October 1905 as transport to RNZ Artillery gun emplacements such as Ft Jervois and Ft Taiaroa.

No pictures available of the Ellen Ballance but she looked similar to the Gordon except for her funnel which was placed further forward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Grt</th>
<th>Propulsion</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Width</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellen Ballance</td>
<td>1884–1907</td>
<td></td>
<td>One shaft, steam reciprocating compound engine</td>
<td>21.3 m 70 ft</td>
<td>4.3 m 14 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janie Seddon</td>
<td>1902–1903</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>Two shaft, steam reciprocating compound engine, 320 ihp (240 kW), 7 knots (13 km/h)</td>
<td>27.4 m 90 ft</td>
<td>5.5 m 18 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Roberts</td>
<td>1902–1923</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>Two shaft, steam reciprocating compound engine, 320 ihp (240 kW), 7 knots (13 km/h)</td>
<td>27.4 m 90 ft</td>
<td>5.5 m 18 ft</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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