

Extract from William Cobbett's Rural Rides, first edition 1830

1st September 1823

I had baited my horse at NEW ROMNEY, and was coming jogging along very soberly, not looking at the sea, then looking at the cattle, then the corn, when, my eye, in swinging round, lighted upon a *great round building*, standing upon the beach. I had scarcely had time to think about what it could be, when twenty or thirty others, standing along the coast, caught my eye; and, if anyone had been behind me, he might have heard me exclaim, in a voice that made my horse bound, "The MARTELLO TOWERS by - ! Oh, Lord! To think that I should be destined to behold these monuments of the wisdom of Pitt and Dundas and Perceval! Good God!

Here they are, piles of bricks in a circular form, about three hundred feet (*guess*) circumference at the base, about forty feet high, and about one hundred and fifty feet circumference at the top. There is a doorway, about midway up, in each, and each has two windows. Cannons were to be fired from the top of these things in order to defend the *country against the French Jacobins!*

I think I have counted along here upwards of thirty of these ridiculous things, which, I dare say, cost five, perhaps ten, thousand pounds each; and one of which was, I am told, sold on the coast of Sussex, the other day, for TWO HUNDRED POUNDS! I dare say they cost MILLIONS. But, far indeed are these from being all, or half or a quarter of the squanderings along here. Here is a CANAL (I crossed it at Appledore) made for the length of thirty miles (from Hythe, in Kent, to RYE, in Sussex) to keep out the French; for, those armies who had so often crossed the Rhine and the Danube, were to be kept back by a canal, made by PITT, thirty feet wide at the most! All along the coast there are works of some sort or other; incessant sinks of money; walls of immense dimensions; masses of stone brought and put into piles.

Oh, God! inscrutable are thy ways; but thou art just, and of thy justice what a complete proof have we in the case of these very Martello Towers! They were erected to come and assist the Jacobin English. The *loyal* people of this coast were fattened by the building of them. Pitt and his loyal *Cinque Ports* waged interminable war against Jacobins. These very *towers* are now used to keep these loyal *Cinque Ports themselves in order!* These towers are now used to lodge men, whose business it is to sally forth, not upon Jacobins, but *upon smugglers!*...