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The CDSG Newsletter

The Coast Defense Study Group, Inc. — Winter 2025

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CDSG 2025 Conference at Boston Report

Gordon Bliss

The CDSG 2025 conference was held 23-27 April at the former harbor defenses of Boston. This conference covered the forts on the islands of Boston Harbor and to the south. Military sites to the north of Boston were covered during the 2016 conference.

The attendees gathered Wednesday evening at the same hotel, now the Nantasket Beach Resort, and in the same meeting room, in Hull, Massachusetts as we used for the previous Boston conference in 2007. We had quite a good turnout with over 60 attendees. The first two days involved water transportation provided by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to islands in the harbor. The weather cooperated for this. The third day involved the land-based transportation and would end up being the only day with significant rain. The last day, Sunday, included a visit to Fort Independence in South Boston in the morning with an optional visit to the heavy cruiser USS *Salem* in Quincy in the afternoon. The Monday add-on day was a visit to Fort Adams in Newport, RI. One site that was considered, Fort Banks in Winthrop with its Abbott quad mortar battery, was originally planned but was dropped when attempts to gain permission to enter the interior fell through and all that would be left would be a quick exterior view of one gun pit which is used by the town's DPW.

Thursday morning found us at the DCR dock in Hingham next to the commuter ferry terminal there to board our transportation for the day – a Navy surplus landing craft (LCM-8). The initial destination was Lovell's Island, the site of Fort Standish. The landing craft ran up on the beach and in classic fashion the ramp dropped and disgorged us onto the island. People individually or in small groups spread out to explore the gun batteries which are spread across the length of the island. Battery Terrill, at one end of the



Battery Terrill (3-6-in DC) Fort Standish



Battery Whipple (2-6-in Ped), Fort Standish

island is much more broken up and affected by erosion than it was during the previous conference. The rest of the batteries are still in reasonable shape, though Battery Williams at the other end of the island has been significantly undermined by erosion.

After departing Lovell's Island, we took a scenic route towards Outer Brewster Island, the site of Battery Jewel. Due to the size of the landing craft and difficult approach to the only viable landing area, we did not land on the island. On the way back in, we got a good look at Boston Light, the oldest continuously in use lighthouse in the US. To have more time at Fort Warren, we did not stop at Great Brewster which only has a mine casemate (used for storage) and an AMTB battery up a steep hill at one end of the island.

At George's Island, site of Fort Warren, we did not use the dock, but once again hit the beach and dropped the ramp and we surged off. There wasn't a chance then but as we re-boarded at the end of the visit, we got most everyone on the ramp to take one of the two group pictures for the conference. Though it was the off-season and the museum there is normally closed, DCR opened it for us so people could view the exhibits. DCR personnel helped facilitate the visit and allowing us to see the various features of both the original Third System fort and the later Endicott period batteries



The LCM-8



Outer Brewster Island



Boston Light



the Mine Storage Building at Fort Warren



Visitor's Center in the Mine Storage Building

and structure. Upon returning to the hotel, after dinner there were presentations in the meeting room.



Fort Warren

Friday morning once again found us at the pier in Hingham. Unlike the day before, this time we would be using the DCR's work boat. As the boat could not accommodate all of us at once, we would be shuttling the group, half of us at a time. Since the two sites we would be visiting were a lot closer to the pier, the boat could get to (and between) them quickly. First up was Long Island, site of Fort Strong. The former cantonment area of the fort is now the site of a seasonal youth camp with some new buildings built for that. There are two batteries in this area but no remaining original structures. The long-closed Long Island Hospital occupies the other half of the island, which we did not enter. Apart from the two batteries mentioned above, all the remaining batteries and tactical structures are concentrated on or adjacent to the elevated head of the island. There is also a lighthouse on the head. Besides the Endicott batteries, thanks to Andy Grant and two volunteers from Fort Mott making and marking a path, we were also able to see some of the 1870's battery constructed just below the top of the head on the seaward side.



The battery line at Fort Strong

After thoroughly exploring Fort Strong, we shuttled over to Peddock's Island, site of Fort Andrews. This fort has fewer batteries to see but still has several of its other structures. The wooden buildings, mostly officers' quarters and the hospital, were demolished some years ago but at the same time the remaining brick structures were mostly stabilized and sealed to protect them from the weather. A few of the brick structures are still used for various purposes including the original guardhouse, which is now



Fort Andrews

the visitor center for the island. It was opened for us to both relax in and view the exhibits inside. The outside porch and steps were used for the second of our group pictures for the conference. The one exception to the demolishing of the wooden buildings is the chapel, which was fully restored quite a few years ago and is still used for weddings and some special events. Unfortunately, the person with the key to it didn't make it out to the island that day and thus we weren't able to see the interior. Some attendees made it through the woods to the top of the hill that has some fire control and other structures. The DCR is in the process of making a marked trail to that area. It was another successful and busy day and by the end of our visit at Fort Andrews, many of attendees were taking the opportunity to relax in and around the guardhouse before shuttling back to the pier in Hingham and a final night of presentations at the hotel.



Barracks buildings at Fort Andrews



Battery Cushing, Fort Andrews

Saturday started rainy as we headed down to Fourth Cliff in Scituate to visit Battery 208 (2x6" BC), which still has its original diesel generators. The site is now an Air Force recreation area and has both a fire control tower and an original fire control cottage still in place. We were able to see the generators inside the battery thanks to the local site manager. Part of the point of land where the site is has been washed away and the fire control tower is now a lot closer to the edge than it used to be. Similarly, the bluff that Battery 208 is located on has steadily eroded over the years and the battery itself will eventually be undermined.



The power room at Battery 208



Fourth Cliff fire control station

Departing Fourth Cliff, some people traveled further south to see the fire control tower at Brant Rock before heading back to Hull to see sites there. By the time we got back to Hull, the rain had mostly stopped, and the rest of the day was fine. The fire control sites on Point Allerton are all in private hands and those were only drive-bys. The main destination was Fort Revere which still has a pair of open and intact 6-inch batteries, as well as a couple of buried ones. It also has a remaining and intact double officers' quarters which the current occupant is working to fully restore and was kind enough to open part of as one room on the first floor is a mini museum for Fort Revere. Upon departing Fort Revere, many of us took the opportunity to drive through Spinnaker (formerly Hog) Island, site of Fort Duvall and Battery Long (2x16" M1919 guns, later casemated during WWII). The small island is now completely covered by a condominium complex. As we no longer had a contact there, all we could do drive around a loop road a view the exterior parts of the battery.

We then headed back to the hotel to prepare for the banquet and annual meeting, held at a restaurant a block away from the hotel.



Restored officer's duplex, Fort Revere



Battery Long casemate on Spinnaker Island



Fire control tower at Point Allerton

Sunday started with some attendees going to Fort Independence in South Boston for a tour there. Officially, the conference ended at this point, but many took advantage of some add-on activities. From Fort Independence they, along with some who just went there directly, then proceeded to the USS *Salem* in Quincy at the former Fore River Shipyard where the ship was built. A guided tour was provided for those that wished to join it.



Fort Independence



The USS *Salem* in Quincy

Then on Monday, many of us went to Fort Adams in Newport, Rhode Island for a tour hosted by Chris Zeeman. The tour included both the Third System fort and some of the Endicott batteries. Once again, the weather cooperated and we had an excellent visit there.



St. Babs XLII group photo at Fort Andrews



St. Babs XLII group photo at Georges Island (Andy Grant)

2025 CDSG Boston Meeting Attendees:

G Banner, Tom Batha, Robert Baylor, Matt Bell, Andy Bennet, Mark Berhow, Gordon Bliss, A Bohn, Erno Bonebakker, Aaron Buda, G Chappell, I Cox, Robert Creedon, Nigel Cunningham, Roger Davis, Robert Duchesneau, Craig Dyson, Mike Fleming, Karl Fritz, Maurice Gehlen, Andy Grant, Robert Grimm, CJ Gutch, B Hartzell, Roy Hatanaka, Marvin Heinze, Stephen Hurley, Chuck Kenneally, David Larsen, Christopher Leblanc, Ned Libby, Scott Logan, Mike Malone, Dale Manuel, Robert McCormack, Terry McGovern, Bruce Nordmark, Don Parks, Paul Prentiss, William Preston, Bill Ricker, Chuck Ruby, David Ruebsamen, Raymond Ruhlmann, Norm Scarpulla, John Scholles, Roger Stevens, Rolf Thoendel, James Touza, Tom Vaughan, Steve Waldron, Robert Walk, Glen Williford, Greg Wolf, Robert Wong, Chip Woodman, Chris Zeeman



Chris Zeeman, Enforcer!