

Sandown (Granite) Fort

Commenced	April 1861	Armament	
Completed	September 1864	1876	Proposed 8 x 10-inch, 4 x 9-inch R.M.L.s
Cost	£ 73,876	1886	Mounted 8 x 10-inch, 4 x 9-inch R.M.L.s
Map Reference	SZ 597839	1891	6 x 10-inch R.M.L. 2 x 9-inch R.M.L.
Position	South Isle of Wight, Middle of Sandown Bay	1895	6 x 10-inch, 2 x 9-inch, 2 x 64pr. R.M.L. (1 x 32pr. SB 1 x 8-inch S.B. parade)
Type	Coast Defence, casemated	1898	6 x 10-inch, 2 x 9-inch, 1 x 9pr. R.M.L. (for practice)
Ditch	Dry	1904	disarmed
Guns	28		
Barrack Accom.	4 officers, 67 men	Caponiers	4
Present use	Zoo and reptile house	Counterscarp galleries	None
History	Barracks, Volunteer practice battery	Haxo casemates	None
Disposal	Sold about 1930	Moncrieff Pits	None
Condition	Much altered internally		
Access	by payment to visit the zoo		
Sources	Precis of Correspondence - 1893, Solent Papers No 2, 1891 Armament book		

History and Description

Referred to as 'Granite' Fort in later documents, this fort was constructed close to the beach in the centre of Sandown Bay 108 ft. above sea level. It consisted of a granite faced fort for 18 guns in casemates behind iron shields. Ten guns were proposed in an earthen battery on the terreplein above in place of an infantry parapet first proposed. This decision was reversed in 1878 due to the construction of supporting batteries at Yaverland, Sandown Barrack and Redcliff. The main magazine on the interior parade proved to be damp and the ditch needed improved drainage and ventilation for sanitary reasons. The gorge of the work was closed with a wall and the whole enceinte surrounded by a ditch flanked by musketry caponiers.

Originally designed for eighteen 9-inch R.M.L. guns the work was believed that it was too cramped to be remodelled for heavier guns when they were introduced. In 1881 it was reported that the armament had been increased in power by substituting 11-inch 18-ton guns in the seaward casemates and its defensive strength increased by the addition of 5 inches to its armour. (These guns do not appear in the armament lists and it is assumed they were not fitted.) In 1887 it was decided to reduce the guns by removing two 9-inch guns from the East Face. These were to be replaced with 2 x 10-inch R.M.L.s from centre of the left half of the southeast face; and the removal of 2 x 10-inch R.M.L.s in centre of right half of southeast face. These were to be placed at Sandown Barrack Battery on High Angle mountings. The vacant positions were filled with concrete at a cost of £1,000 to act as traverses and the expense magazines were given additional front protection against sea attack.

In 1897 there were proposals to mount three 3-pounder QF guns on the terreplein of the fort on travelling carriages from Hurst Castle but these were probably not fitted. In 1895 some SB guns were mounted on the parade and 1898 a 9pr. R.M.L. was mounted in the east face for practice. From 1904 the fort appears to have been disarmed although other plans suggest that there was a proposal to fit six 5-inch B.L.s and three 3-inch Q.F.s on top. The fort was used for accommodation only.

The fort was sold in about 1930, the rear of it was demolished and it is now a private zoo and little of the original fort can be seen from within. In 1943 the fort was used to shelter one of the terminals for PLUTO which carried fuel to the Normandy beaches. The roofs of the two front face caponiers are just visible beneath the car park and some of the iron shields are still in place.

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