

Portland Breakwater Fort

Commenced	1868	Armament	
Completed	1875	Original intended armament	14 x 12.5-inch 38 ton RMLs
Cost	£ 75,968 to June 1868 (£202,658 Est.)	1892	7 x 12.5-inch R.M.Ls
Map Reference		1898	6 x 12.5-inch R.M.L. 2 x 12pr. QFs on roof.
Position	Portland Harbour breakwater	1907	2 x 6-inch BL IV guns on roof 2 x 12pr. on jetty
Type	Circular casemated iron on granite	1919	2 x 6-inch BL IV guns on roof 2 x 12pr. on jetty
Ditch	The sea	1943	40mm bofors?
Guns	14		
Barrack Accom.		Caponiers	None
Present use	Empty	Counterscarp galleries	None
History	Coast defence to 1956. Lighthouse on top.	Haxo casemates	None
Disposal	Handed to the Navy in 1956	Moncrieff Pits	None
Condition	Deteriorating		
Access	By arrangement with Portland Base		
Sources	'Fort' Volume 9, 1868 Committee Report, Lecture by Col. Inglis The Development of Iron Armour to 1882		

History and Description

The 1860 Commission called for a large casemated fort on the extremity of Portland Breakwater and by June 1868 the foundation ring, 200ft. in diameter, constructed by Mr. Coode C.E, was twelve feet above the high water mark. The fort was then handed to the War Department. Settlement caused the design of the fort to be reconsidered, one of the plans being for a two-tiered iron fort mounting fourteen guns in the lower storey with fifteen in the upper one costing £273,658. An alternative plan for a one-tiered fort mounting fourteen guns costing £199,213 with four gun turrets on top for a total of eight guns costing £229,846 was eventually chosen. As with the Spithead forts the turrets were not supplied. The fort, designed by Captain E.H. Steward R.E. is 116 feet in diameter with 6.5-inch plate walls, containing fourteen embrasures, constructed on top of spawls faced with granite masonry. The gun floor is 23ft. above H.W.M. The fort is constructed in a similar manner to the iron portions of Spitbank Fort at Portsmouth with two strong rings of box-girder construction going all round the battery, one at the level of the floor the other at roof level, against which the armoured wall rests. This consists of three 6.5-inch plates with port frames of 2.25-inches. The original armament was to be 12.5-inch RML guns and an L shaped jetty was built alongside to land these 38-ton guns. The fort was complete by 1875 and received its armament by 1880. Provision was made for the guns to be operated by steam power. The reported armament (Lilley) in 1892 was seven 12.5-inch RMLs on the seaward side. At this time it was also reported that the basement was adapted for the use of Whitehead torpedoes. The fort was re-armed in 1898 with two 12pr. Q.F.s on the roof to supplement two already in place on the breakwater. These were followed by 2 x 6-inch BL guns in 1907 which were still on the armament returns of WW1. The 12prs. were removed in 1920. The Navy have always referred to the Fort under its original name of Fort Head (North Head) or Fort Chequers, presumably due to its receiving the same chequer camouflage pattern as the forts at Spithead. Some broken 12.5-inch RMLs, still lie in the sea close to the fort.

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