

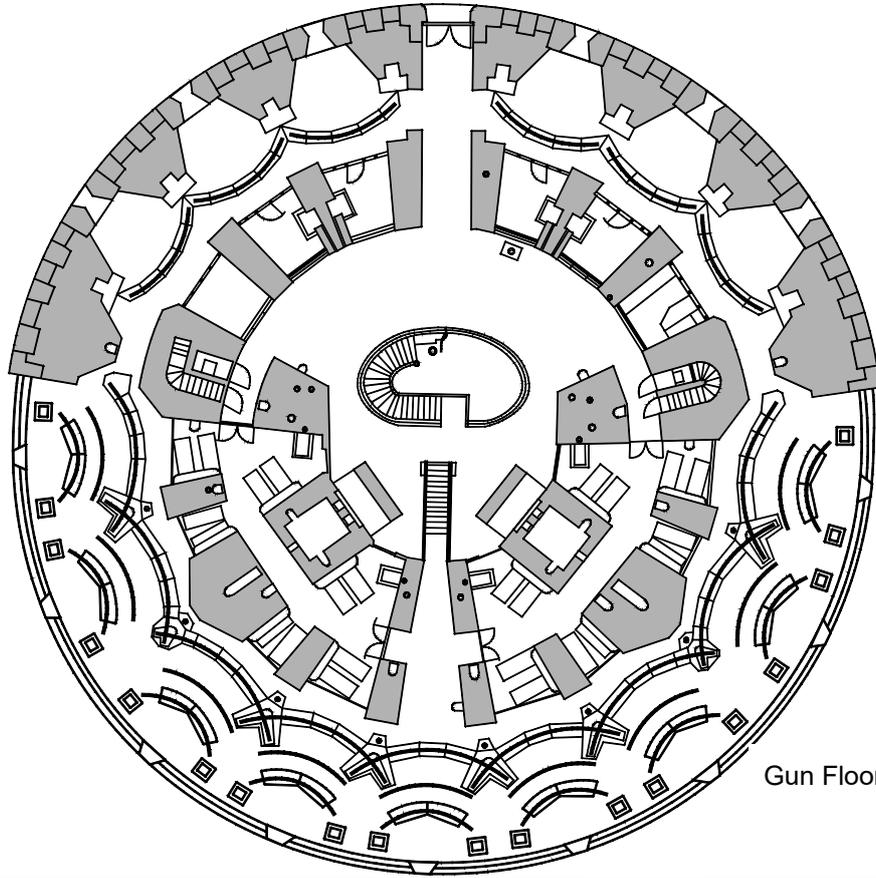
Spitbank Fort

Commenced	July 1861 and March 1867	Armament	
Completed	1878	1876	Approved 6 x 7-inch, 9 x 10-inch R.M.L.s
Cost	£ 167,300	1893	- Mounted 6 x 7-inch, 9 x 12.5-inch R.M.L.s (one 7-inch removed by 1898)
Map Reference	SZ 636972	1899	- Mounted 9 x 12.5-inch R.M.L.s, 2 x 4.7-inch QF
Position	In sea, entrance to Portsmouth Harbour, Spithead	1906	- Mounted 3 x 12.5-inch R.M.L.s, 2 x 4.7-inch QF
Type	Coast defence, Sea Fort / iron and granite	1910	- Mounted 2 x 4.7-inch QF, 2 x 6-inch B.L.
Ditch	None - in sea	WWII	
Guns	15		2 x Lewis, 1 x 40mm Bofors, 1 x 6-inch B.L.
Barrack Accom.	Peacetime 27		
Present use	Privately owned, open to public tours		
History	Manned up to end of WW2. Put up for disposal in 1963 Sold to Clarenco 2009		
Disposal	Restored		
Condition	Summer season tours, boat from Gunwharf Keys: Solent Forts		
Access			
Sources	Solent Papers No 1 'Spitbank and the Spithead Forts' G. Mitchell and A. Cantwell		

History and Description

The Spithead forts were built in the 1860s to guard the eastern approaches to Spithead and Portsmouth Harbour. The forts were approved by the Royal Commission of 1860 and work began on Spitbank in 1861. Work stopped in Spring of 1862 and political arguments as to their suitability ensued; various reports were asked for and supplied before work eventually re-commenced on Spitbank in March 1867. Designed by Captain E. Steward R.E. the forts were adapted to include iron portions designed by Captain Inglis R.E. consisting of twenty five inches of iron plate, wrought-iron and teak sandwiched in layers in order to withstand the latest naval guns. Standing on a stone and concrete foundation ring built directly on the seabed Spitbank Fort is constructed of iron, concrete and granite. The fort is circular with a diameter of 162 feet at the bottom narrowing to 146 feet. The lower level basement of the fort contained the shell and cartridge stores together with the kitchen and stores. On the gun floor level Spitbank is constructed in two halves, the outer iron portion designed to hold nine 10-inch guns whilst the inner brick-vaulted, granite-faced portion facing the harbour entrance was to hold six 7-inch RML guns. Peace-time accommodation was allowed for in two barrack rooms behind the gun floor, each for twelve men and quarters for two sergeants and one or two officers. The war-time garrison would have been accommodated in hammocks. The roof is of concrete. Original proposals called for two guns in turrets on the roof but these were omitted from the final plans. An artesian well was sunk in the middle of the fort in 1877. Water was reached at a depth of 401 feet. The armament was upgraded several times, large 12.5-inch 35-ton guns being substituted in the iron portions for the 10-inch guns by 1893. These were removed by 1905 leaving three as running-past guns. Two 4.7-inch guns were then fitted on the roof and searchlights were also added, the role of the fort now being to counter light craft instead of heavy warships. The armament was revised again in 1905 to take two 6-inch BL guns on the roof which remained until 1916. The 4.7-inch guns remained until 1921 but were re-fitted in 1926. A 6-inch gun was refitted in 1931 and the 4.7-inch guns removed finally in 1938. During the Second World War two Lewis guns and a 40mm Bofors were added. This was removed in 1945 and the 6-inch gun was taken off in 1948. Coast defence was disbanded in 1956 and the searchlights and generators removed from the fort the following year. The fort remained in military hands until sold to Sean Maguire in 1982. It was again sold in November 2009 to Clarenco Properties who converted it to an 'Amazing Retreat' for hire.

Spitbank Fort



Gun Floor

