

West Blockhouse Fort

Commenced	c1854	Armament	
Completed	by 1858	c1860-c1875	6 x 68pr SB
Cost	£ unknown	c1875-c1900	6 x 80pr.RML
Map Reference	OS 817035	1893	Mounted 6 x 80pr RML Proposed 6 x 80pr RML practice only
Position	West Blockhouse Point	1900	Disarmed
Type	Coast Battery with defensible barracks	Practice Battery	
Ditch	Dry	1901-c1907	4 x 5-inch BL 2 x 3pdr QF (roof)
Guns	6	Caponiers	None
Barrack Accom.	42	Counterscarp galleries	None
Present use	Owned by Landmark Trust	Haxo casemates	None
History	Coast battery and practice battery	Moncrieff Pits	None
Disposal	1956		
Condition	Good-habitable		
Access	Rent from Landmark Trust or visit with their permission.		
Sources	1858 & 1868 Committee Reports, Precis of Correspondence prior to 1893 National Archives.		

History and Description

A work at West Blockhouse Point seems to have originated in the eighteen fifties as there is no mention of a work there before that decade; what is certain is that it had been built by 1858 as in that year it was criticised for the barracks being too close to the battery as shells exploding against the barracks could render the battery untenable. In 1871 it was proposed to abandon the batteries at Dale Point, Thorne Island and West Blockhouse but Thorne Island and West Blockhouse *should be retained as even with their existing armament these two works were of value in guarding an advanced line of submarine mines. It was further recommended that when funds could be made available they could be armed with 3 x 18tons guns in casemates.* In 1872 it was decided that the proposed guns at West Blockhouse and Thorne Island should be 80pr RML. In 1886 it was decided that: *no heavy defence is required in advance of Stack rock and West Blockhouse and Thorne Island should be disarmed.*

In 1893 the battery was reduced to practice status until disarmed in 1900. The battery was remodelled in 1901 to take four 5-inch BL guns on Vasseur mountings and retained its practice status, at the same time two 3pdr QF guns were mounted on the roof of the barracks also for practice; the positions for these guns are still extant today. By 1907 the guns had gone. After the construction of West Blockhouse Battery, the Fort was used as a store and perhaps as extra accommodation. In the Second World War the Fort was the searchlight headquarters for the Haven's defences and two searchlight positions were built close to the Fort, the one to the west of the Fort still retains its armoured shutters.

The Fort was purchased by the Landmark Trust who restored it and converted it into accommodation suitable for holiday letting so it is possible to stay at the Fort and appreciate the view of the Haven entrance and the Bristol Channel.

The Fort is built of limestone and is situated on West Blockhouse Point. At the front of the Fort is the gun battery originally for six guns firing en barbette over a low parapet. The positions extant today, in spite of some of the masonry being thrown over the parapet onto the rocks, are for the four 5-inch guns. Behind the battery is the barracks consisting of two floors and the roof where there is a loopholed parapet and the remains of the positions where the two 3pdr QF guns were mounted. The entrance to the barracks is over a drawbridge that spans the moat and levels out to form the terreplein for the gun battery.

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