

Coalhouse Fort

Commenced	July 1861	Armament	
Completed	1874	1874	4 x 12.5-inch, 13 x 11-inch, 3 x 9-inch RMLs (12.5-inch mounted 1878/9 1 x 11-inch mounted 1879/80)
Cost	£ 130,000 (£211,063 estimated)	1895	4 x 12.5-inch, 9 x 11-inch RMLs in casemates plus 3 x 9-inch RMLs, 4 x 6pr QF (2)
Map Reference	TR 694 768	1903	4 x 6-inch BLs, 4 x 12pr. Q.F. 4 x 12.5-inch RMLs
Position	North bank of River Thames Sea/river	1912	4 x 6-inch BL 4 x 6pr. Q.F. 4 x 12pr.Q.F.
Type		1913	7 x 32pr. SBBL on standing carriages for saluting
Ditch	Wet outer, dry inner	1914	2 x 6-inch B.L.
Guns	20 - 12 casemated 8 en-barbette	WWII	2 x 5.5-inch ex-naval 1 x Bofors AA
Barrack Accom.	6 officers, 180 men (300 proposed)	Caponiers	
Present use	In public park. Undergoing restoration	Counterscarp galleries	
History	H.M.S. St Clement training establishment 1946	Haxo casemates	
Disposal	Bata Shoe Co 1949, Local authority	Moncrieff Pits	
Condition	1962 Pretty good		
Access	Occasional open days, or by arrangement with Coalhouse Fort Project		
Sources	Victor Smith 'Coalhouse Fort & the Artillery Defences at East Tilbury'		

History and Description

The later Coalhouse Fort was constructed on the site of earlier forts dating from 1795 and 1854. In 1861 work began on the basement. The original plan was for a fort mounting 28 guns in casemates, firing through iron shields, and another 28 guns en barbette on its roof. The new fort consists of a semi-circular casemated battery with facings of granite. It was to defend the narrowing approaches of the Thames with heavy armour-piercing RMLs positioned on low ground. Beneath the gun casemates are the usual magazine arrangements with shell and cartridge stores and an ammunition passage with lifts to the gun floor. A two storey barrack block of Kentish rag stone with bastion-like projections closes the rear of the fort. A central parade is divided by a single gun ramp. A sixty foot wide moat surrounded the fort. The fort underwent the usual modifications to provide traverses and some of the casemates were filled with concrete. By 1903 new concrete emplacements for 4 x 6-inch BLs and 4 x 12 pr. Q.F.s were added on the roof. Some of the Q.F.s were removed and searchlights added, the ditch filled and the casemates partially earthed-up to disguise the fort's outline to some extent. A small battery for four 6pr. Q.F. with searchlights was built to the south of the fort, later reduced to two. Two 12.5-inch RMLs were, however, retained until 1908. In the 1939-45 period the fort's armament was again modified for more up to date weapons and anti-aircraft defence. The fort also acted as a degaussing station to counter the threat of German magnetic mines and some remains of buildings associated with this function also survive. Coalhouse Fort is now owned by the local authority and is slowly being restored by a group of dedicated enthusiasts. It is opened to the public from time to time. More information can be found in 'Fortifications of East Anglia' by Peter Kent.

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