

East Weare Batteries

Commenced	1862
Completed	1869
Cost	£ 215.667 (including The Verne)
Map Reference	SY 697739
Position	Western side of Portland Harbour, east side of The Verne
Type	six barbette batteries
Ditch	None
Guns	Intended for 27 guns
Barrack Accom.	In The Verne
Present use	Undecided
History	Coast defence then Naval training
Disposal	1996/7
Condition	Varies from poor to good
Access	Not yet
Sources	1869 Committee Report FSG Fort supplement Vol. 9 1981 Armament returns in WO33

Armament

1877 & 1885

A (no.4)	5 x 9-inch 2 x 10-inch	4 x 10-inch RML
B (no.3)	2 x 9-inch 1 x 10-inch	2 x 10-inch RML
C (no.5)	2 x 9-inch 2 x 10-inch	2 x 10-inch RML
D (no.2)	2 x 9-inch 1 x 10-inch	2 x 9-inch RML
E (no.6)	2 x 9-inch 1 x 10-inch	nil

1891

1893

A	1 x 10-inch
B	nil
C	2 x 9-inch 2 x 10-inch
D	2 x 9-inch 1 x 10-inch
E	2 x 9-inch 1 x 10-inch
Proposed	12 x 10-inch on Long Range Mountings

1898

A	4 x 10-inch
B	2 x 10-inch RML
C	5 x 10-inch
D	2 x 9-inch
Proposed	3 x 6-inch BL VII

1900

A	- 2 x 9.2-inch B.L. X on Barb.V
B	- 3 x 6-inch B.L. VII on C.P.II

1919 1 x 5-inch B.L. on GVII for drill and signal.

1930 - 56

A	- 2 x 9.2-inch B.L. X on Barb.V
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History and Description

At the time the Royal Commission reported some batteries had already been constructed on the hill to the east of The Verne. These were known as Verne outworks and consisted of four positions to the west and two positions to the east of 'Admiralty Incline'. The Royal Commission considered The Verne and the East Weare Batteries as a whole, as the batteries complete the defences of the Citadel on its eastern side. The accommodation for the troops manning the batteries was provided for in The Verne. A sally port in the east face of The Verne zigzagged down the cliff to the batteries, which were arranged in a line of six batteries mounting 27 guns altogether. The 1868 Committee of Enquiry labelled the batteries in order from north to south as 1, 6, 2, 5, 3, and 4, all on the west side of Admiralty Incline. Nos 1 and 6 had not yet been commenced at the time of the visit. No.6 was eventually completed but no.1 ran into problems as secure foundations could not be obtained. It was never constructed but was probably intended for the same armament as No.6 to bring the total to 27 guns in all. From about 1877 these batteries were designated A to F. They varied in height from 150 to 234 feet above sea level and were of open earth with embrasures. The batteries were enclosed on the East, North and South sides with an unclimbable pallisade fence. On the west side the cliff and The Verne Citadel afforded more than adequate defence. It was intended to arm the batteries with 12-ton guns and fit Moncrieff emplacements as flank pieces of each of the batteries but this idea was abandoned.

In 1871 it was decided to put 10-inch RMLs in the salients of the batteries, a total of seven 10-inch RMLs to be provided for this. By 1886 the batteries were re-modelled to take C pivot 9-inch and 10-inch RMLs. Behind the batteries were the usual artillery stores, a small redoubt, a resident gunner's house and a self-defensible detention barracks was built above B battery. Soon after this more modifications took place, the two centre gun positions of C Battery were altered to take 2 x 10-inch RMLs on C pivots with sunken way. B Battery was modified to take 2 x 10-inch RML in positions 1 & 2 and the third gun removed. A battery was re-armed with 4 x 10-inch RMLs. In 1893 it was proposed to remove all 9-inch RMLs and replace them with 10-inch RMLs all on long range mountings, seven already mounted and 5 to come from The Nothe Fort, 12 in all. The six emplacements in A and B Batteries had by then been remodelled for tail traversing under the Imperial Defence Loan of 1888 when it was decided that all guns in the East Weare Batteries should be 10-inch.

From 1899 to 1901 the final upgrading of the armament installed two 9.2-inch BL guns in A Battery and three six inch BL guns in B Battery. New magazines with lamp room and paint store were constructed and the old main magazine became the sergeant's mess and quarters. A range finding station and Battery Observation Post were placed near to the Detention Barracks. Movable armament of 40pr. B.L. guns were used in practice in 1902. In 1915 the disused D Battery was handed over to the Royal Navy for the storage of explosives in the magazine. By 1917 one 6-inch gun was removed and the other two followed by 1919. The pits were roofed over during WWII. The 9.2-inch BLs were still listed as in place in 1943 and they remained until 1956. Today E. Battery can be seen near to the Naval cemetery. Batteries A to D are within the old Naval Dockyard perimeter. D Battery was 1996/7 cleared of undergrowth and earth filling but has since been left to overgrow once more. C Battery is intact but heavily eroded in places. A and B Battery were used for fire training by the navy and the gun emplacements very badly damaged.

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