

## Drakes Island

<b>Commenced</b>	1860	<b>Armament</b>
<b>Completed</b>	1864	
<b>Cost</b>	£ 62,108	<b>Earlier Batteries</b>
<b>Map Reference</b>	SX 470528	<b>1805</b> 22 x 32pr SB 6 x 18pr SB 2 x brass mortars.
<b>Position</b>	Drakes Island, Sea Defences Inner Line.	<b>New Batteries</b>
<b>Type</b>	Casemated Coast battery	<b>1860 Proposed</b> Upper Battery 5 x 12-inch Casemates 21 x 9-inch RML
<b>Ditch</b>	none	<b>1864</b> temporarily armed with 68prs
<b>Guns</b>	Lower 21 Upper 5	<b>1880</b> 9 x 9-inch RML 12tons
<b>Barrack Accom.</b>	180	<b>1885 Revised armament</b>
<b>Present use</b>	Empty and unused: For sale 2012	Lower Battery 6 x 80pr RML 2 x 64pr RML Upper Battery 2 x 12-inch RML 3 x 11-inch RML Casemates 13 x 9-inch RML
<b>History</b>	Coast defence, Training, National Trust	<b>1893 Lower Battery South West Face</b> 6 x 80pr R.M.L.
<b>Disposal</b>	1995	<b>Main Battery</b> 2 x 12-inch R.M.L. 3 x 11-inch R.M.L. 1 x 18pr SB for signalling
<b>Condition</b>	Fair	<b>Casemate Battery, South East casemate</b> 10 x 9-inch R.M.L.
<b>Access</b>	None	<b>Casemate Battery, East Casemate</b> 3 x 9-inch R.M.L.
<b>Sources</b>	Précis of Correspondence relating to the Defences of Plymouth prior to 1893 The Historic Defences of Plymouth : Woodward & Pye	<b>Added</b> 3 x 12pr QF <b>Reduced</b> 6 x 80pr RML 2 x 12-inch RML <b>1899</b> 3 x 11-inch 8 x 9-inch 4 x 6pr QF <b>1903</b> 3 x 6-inch BL Mk VII/II 6 x 12pdr all RMLs dismantled <b>Post WWI</b> 2 x 6-inch BL 4 x 12pdrs. <b>1942</b> 2 x twin six pounder 2 x 12pdrs <b>1947</b> BLs removed

### History and Description

The earlier Drakes Island open battery with masonry embrasures was armed with the usual mixture of Smooth Bore guns in 1805. The Royal Commission of 1859 considered Drakes Island to *bear such an important part in the event of an attack from sea, both in the defence of the entrance into Hamoaze, the defence of The Sound and the support of the Citadel and all other works protecting the entrance to the harbour, that the necessity of strengthening the works on the island cannot be over-rated. The sea face of Drakes Island bears on the anchorage inside the breakwater at up to 2,200 yards range.*

In 1867 the combined committees considered a project for re-modelling the existing upper battery at Drakes Island and mounting five powerful guns (23-ton) behind earthworks en barbette. *As this battery can only be engaged at long range until the enemy has passed the breakwater, they recommend the adoption of the proposal.* They considered the adoption of Moncrieff mountings.

The lower battery on Drakes Island was constructed as a casemated battery for 21 x 9-inch 12-ton guns protected by iron shields although in 1880 the Defence Committee noted that some of the shields had not yet been fitted. It had a large magazine in the rear connecting to expense magazines immediately behind the passage to the rear of the casemates. The roof of the battery was designed for a barbette battery consisting of five of the heaviest available guns 11 and 12-inch RMLs. This was altered to allow the use of Moncrieff guns but no guns were ever fitted as the upper battery was struck from the proposals. In 1978 work carried out by Plymouth Corporation unearthed four RMLs on the island, three 11-inch RMLs and one 12-inch RML. The 12-inch RML of 25tons was mounted on a replica carriage built by Plymouth Corporation under the direction of Colin Carpenter. It was test fired on 22 November 1983, using 22 pounds of pebble powder, shattering nearby windows.

In 1885 the R.A. and R.E.Works Committee reported on the revision of armament to meet modern conditions stating that at Drakes Island *the gun detachments in main battery are too exposed. The parapets to be raised and carriages adopted to some under-cover loading system. The vacant casemates need not be armed.*

The island provided accommodation for officers and men in purpose built barrack blocks. The western QF battery was commenced in 1897 and completed in 1898 for three 12pdr QF guns. The guns remained through WWI when one was removed. The other two were held in reserve until 1930 and were removed in 1942 and replaced by a twin-six built on the westernmost emplacement. The 6-inch BL battery for three guns was commenced in 1900 and completed in 1901. The western gun was removed by 1930. All emplacements survive intact. The eastern QF battery directly above the casemated battery was approved in 1900 and completed in 1901 for three 12pr QF guns. In 1942 two twin 6dr guns were fitted.

The site was disarmed in 1947 and the island was used for training until 1963. The National Trust ran it as an adventure training facility until 1989. It was acquired by Plymouth Argyl and in 2012 was put up for sale for development as housing. In 2019 plans were submitted for a island hotel complex.

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