

Hurst Castle

Commenced	1861	Armament	
Completed	1870	1893	
Cost	£ 140,000 + £80,000 for shields		10 x 12.5-inch RML
Map Reference	SZ 317898		15 x 10-inch RML
Position	Mainland / Needles passage		5 x 9-inch RML
	Western approaches		3 x 64pr. RML
Type	Coast Battery / Casemated		3 x 6pdr QF (dismounted)
Ditch	Dry		3 x 3pdr QF
Guns	61		3 x 0.45" MG
Barrack Accom.		1941	
Present use	English Heritage site		2 x twin 6pr. by 1944 two 40mm AA Bofors added
History	Coast defence	Caponiers	3 (1 left)
Disposal		Counterscarp galleries	None
Condition	Mostly restored	Haxo casemates	None
Access	All week in Summer, weekends in Winter	Moncrieff Pits	None
Sources	Solent Papers No 2		

History and Description

The Victorian wing batteries of Hurst Castle were added to the Tudor keep to replace earlier wing batteries that were considered to be too low-lying and liable to swept with grape shot by passing warships. The new wing batteries are casemated and granite faced with iron shields. They were designed to bring heavy RML guns to bear on ships rapidly passing Hurst on the fast current through the Needles passage. The west battery had positions for 37 guns, whilst the east had positions for 24 guns. Work began in 1861 and the superstructure was completed by 1870. The wing batteries were not fully armed until 1879 because of the pace of development of bigger and better guns and thicker armour plate on battle ships. The original plan was to mount sixty one 9-inch RMLs with three two-gun turrets on the roof. Only twenty one 9-inch guns had been mounted by 1873 when it was proposed to mount more powerful guns. The roof turrets were never fitted. Another plan called for four 9-inch Moncrieff emplacements on the roof and this idea was also abandoned. Eventually by 1879, after thicker shields had been fitted, sixteen of the 9-inch guns were removed and heavier 12.5-inch and 10-inch RMLs put in their places. The remaining five 9-inch guns were left in the east wing battery. Eight 12.5-inch RMLs and fifteen 10-inch RMLs were fitted in the west wing whilst two 12.5-inch RMLs and eight 10-inch RMLs were placed in the east wing. The Tudor castle held three 64pr. RMLs. In 1889, as in most other Victorian Coast batteries, Hurst was strengthened against shells penetrating the magazines. Part of each flank magazine was filled with concrete and traverses were provided by filling nine of the casemates with concrete. The western expense magazines were rebuilt to store shells at ground level and cartridges below. As the RMLs became obsolete they were gradually withdrawn leaving Hurst with 3 x 12pr. QFs and 3 machine guns by 1909, together with a few RMLs as running past guns. In 1898, 1902 and 1914 searchlight emplacements were added. The RMLs were to be used 1914 to 1918 with case shot against torpedo boats. The 12pr. QFs and searchlights were removed in 1928 and the fort put in care and maintenance until 1940 when two 12pr. QFs were installed in their old emplacements. Searchlights were added and in 1941 two twin 6pr guns were fitted on the roof of the west wing. In 1943 a 40mm AA Bofors was added to the east wing, with another in 1944. The AA guns were removed in 1945, the 12prs in 1948 and twin sixes in 1957 when coast defences were abolished. The castle is currently being restored by English Heritage and is open to the public.

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