Cliff End Fort (Fort Albert)

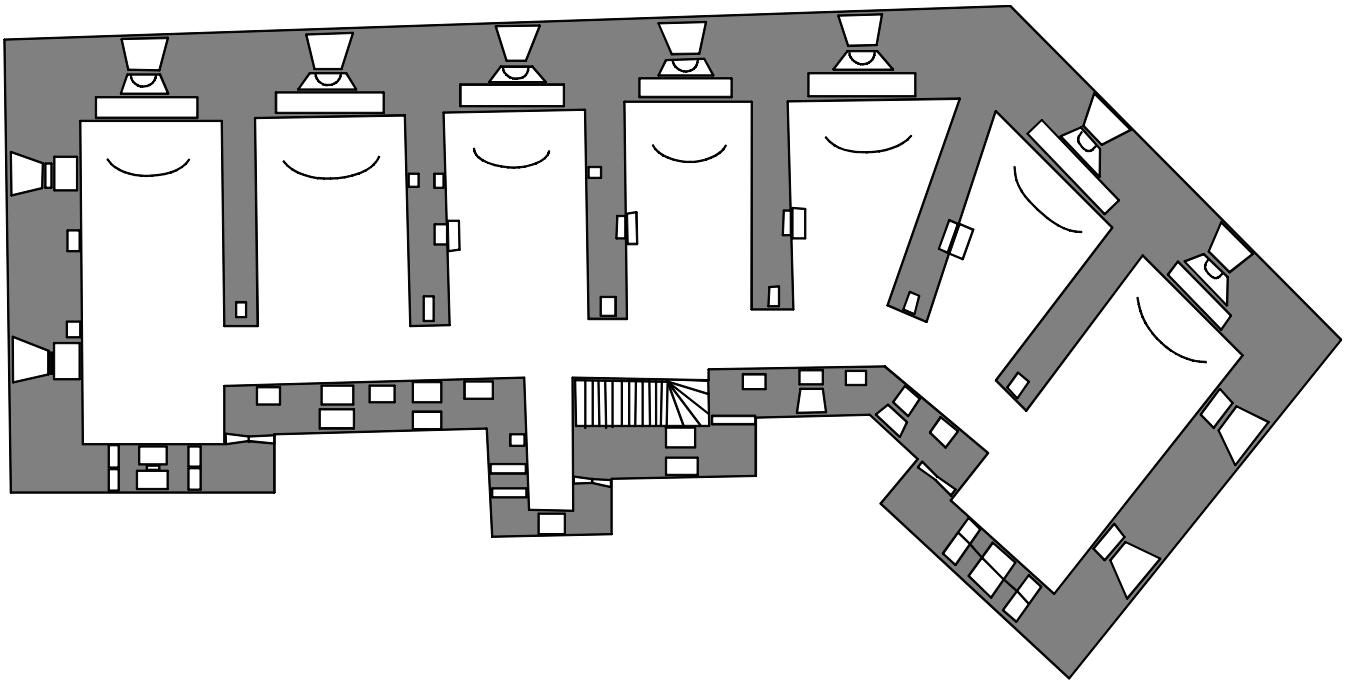
Commenced	1852
Completed	1856
Cost £	
Map Reference	SZ 330890
Position	Isle of Wight / west
Type	Sea Front
Ditch	None - Sea in front
Guns	29
Barrack Accom.	
Present use	Private luxury flats (eight)
History	Coast defence Brennan torpedo station
Disposal	Sold 1965
Condition	Damp - sea leaks into basement.
Access	None - can be viewed from cliff top
Sources	Solent Papers No 2, Precis of correspondence prior to 1898

Armament

Original	7 x 68pr SB 14 x 8-inch SB
	6 x 32pr. SB 2 x 8-inch How.
1861	68prs. replaced with 7 x 7-inch R.B.L.
Withdrawn 1872	14 x 8-inch SB 6 x 32pr SB
Proposed	7 x 7-inch R.M.L.
1887	7 x 7-inch & 2 x 8-inch How, removed
1893 - 1898	3 x 3pr. QF 3 x 0.45 MG
	3 x 6pr on field carriages. to be added
1902	3 x MG parapet c. 3 x MG infantry c.
1903-1909	3 x MG pc
1910	2 x MG
1922	2 x 12pr. 12cwt. on QF1
1941	2 x twin-six 1942 1 x 40mm bofors

Caponiers	None
Counterscarp galleries	None
Haxo casemates	None
Moncrieff Pits	None

History and Description

This fort was designed by William Drummond Jervois, later Inspector General of Fortifications. The original intention was for a semi-circular fort of approximately 41 guns on Warden Ledge but this idea was abandoned because of costs and unstable ground. The beach at Cliff was chosen for the new fort but shortage of money resulted in the construction of a small brick fort for 29 guns in four tiers. The north flank of the fort was 'refused' to protect against enfilade. The basement magazines were prone to flooding from the very start. The original armament was seven 68pr SB on the ground floor, seven 8-inch shell guns on each of the first and second floors with six 32pr. SBs and two 8-inch howitzers on the roof. A loopholed roof gallery covered the slopes behind the fort with musketry, the ground being higher than the fort. An access road wound down to the fort and the entrance was over a wooden gangway into the first floor via some steps. The 68prs. were replaced by seven 7-inch R.B.L.s in 1861. The other SB guns were removed after 1972 when it was proposed to fit 7-inch RMLs. This was not done and the remaining 7-inch RBLs and SB Howitzers were removed in 1887 when the fort became redundant as a gun platform, being used instead as an infantry barracks. In 1886-88 a portion of the fort was converted for use with a Brennan Torpedo installation. A lean-to was added to the north section with a launch ramp and associated engine room and torpedo handling room. The northern portion of the fort was filled to the roof with sea sand to protect the installation. The remaining casemates were used for accommodation. Between 1893 and 1899 three 3prs QFs on field carriages were allotted to the fort with three more mounted 'on cones in permanent emplacements below Cliff End Fort'. Next in 1898 three 6prs. were proposed to replace the 3prs. The 3prs appear to have remained whilst those outside were replaced. (The 1900 return no longer refers to 'near Cliff End Fort' but proposed 2 x 4.7-inch guns 'near Cliff End Battery' which may be the same site.) In 1907 two searchlight emplacements were added to the fort. In 1909 the fort replaced Freshwater Redoubt as a practice battery for Golden Hill School of Gunnery with four rooftop 12prs. in place until 1915-16. Two rooftop 12prs were again in place in 1925. They were dismantled in 1941 when two twin 6prs with director towers were added to the roof. The filled casemates were emptied for use as magazines. In 1942 a searchlight and 40mm bofors were added. The fort has now been modernized and converted into eight luxury flats. The Brennan installation has been completely removed.

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