Fort Victoria (Sconce Point Battery)

Commenced	1852
Completed	1855
Cost £	
Map Reference	SZ 339898
Position	Isle of Wight / West
Type	Triangular Casemated Sea Battery
Ditch	Wet
Guns	33
Barrack Accom.	
Present use	Sea facing casemates remain, part aquarium, tea room and shop.
History	Infantry barracks. Submarine mining depot
Disposal	Vacated by Army 1962
Condition	Partly demolished 1969
Access	Open to the public all year round
Sources	Solent Papers No 2, Precis of correspondence prior to 1898

Armament

Original armament
10 x 68pr. SB western,
11 x 10-inch SB shell guns northern,
6 x 32pr. SB on each barrack roof
1861 3 x 7-inch RBL salient casemates
Withdrawn in 1872
3 x 7-inch RBL 8 x 10-inch S.B.
10 x 68pr. 12 x 32pr.
Proposed 13 x 64pr. R.M.L.
1876 Disarmed

Caponiers	None
Counterscarp galleries	None
Haxo casemates	None
Moncrieff Pits	None

History and Description

The same invasion scare of the 1840s that led to the construction of Fort Albert resulted in the construction of Fort Victoria on Sconce point to cover the deep water channel. The original plans called for two casemated batteries meeting at an obtuse angle, the flanks terminating in square towers and a loopholed wall closing the fort off to the rear. Again money dictated another plan and the resultant triangular fort was complete by 1855. The two seaward casemated batteries meet at a right angle with the flanks refused to protect against enfilade. The gun casemates had open upper portions to allow enemy shell fire to pass through rather than cause it to burst inside injuring the gun crews. A broad parados stood behind the casemates to protect the inner barracks which closed off the gorge. An earthen glacis protected the front of the sea facing casemates. This sloped down to a wet ditch which protected the fort against infantry attack. The rear of the fort was closed by two barrack blocks each of two storeys joined by a loopholed wall with the entrance in the middle fitted with a portcullis and drawbridge. Six 32pr. SB guns on traversing platforms mounted on each barrack roof could fire seawards over the top of the lower casemated sea batteries. Additional gun ports facing seawards were sited on the upper floors of each barrack but were never armed. The fort was briefly armed with an additional three 7-inch R.B.L.s but in 1872 the Defence Committee recommended that the fort be dismantled The fort was disarmed in 1876 when it had become increasingly used purely as a barracks. The Royal Engineers took over the fort in that year and it was converted into a submarine mining depot, the casemates were used for storing sea mines. The parados was removed and buildings added as offices. A tramway was constructed allowing loaded mines to be run out to the pier for placing on mine-laying boats. The north ditch was filled with cable tanks and a test room was built into the hillside. An experimental sea-saw searchlight pit was fitted west fo the fort in 1888. Three searchlights were added in 1898-99 to illuminate the minefield. The Royal Engineers left in 1920 and the fort was placed in care and maintenance. It was use as a store for towed targets for the nearby practice batteries in 1939. From 1941-43 it served as a barracks for the 72nd. Coast Training Regiment, R.A. It also served for various units training prior to D -Day. The fort was relinquished by the army in 1962 and the local council demolished the barracks completely in 1969. The seaward casemates survive as a tea shop, aquarium and small display area. Access is possible at all times.

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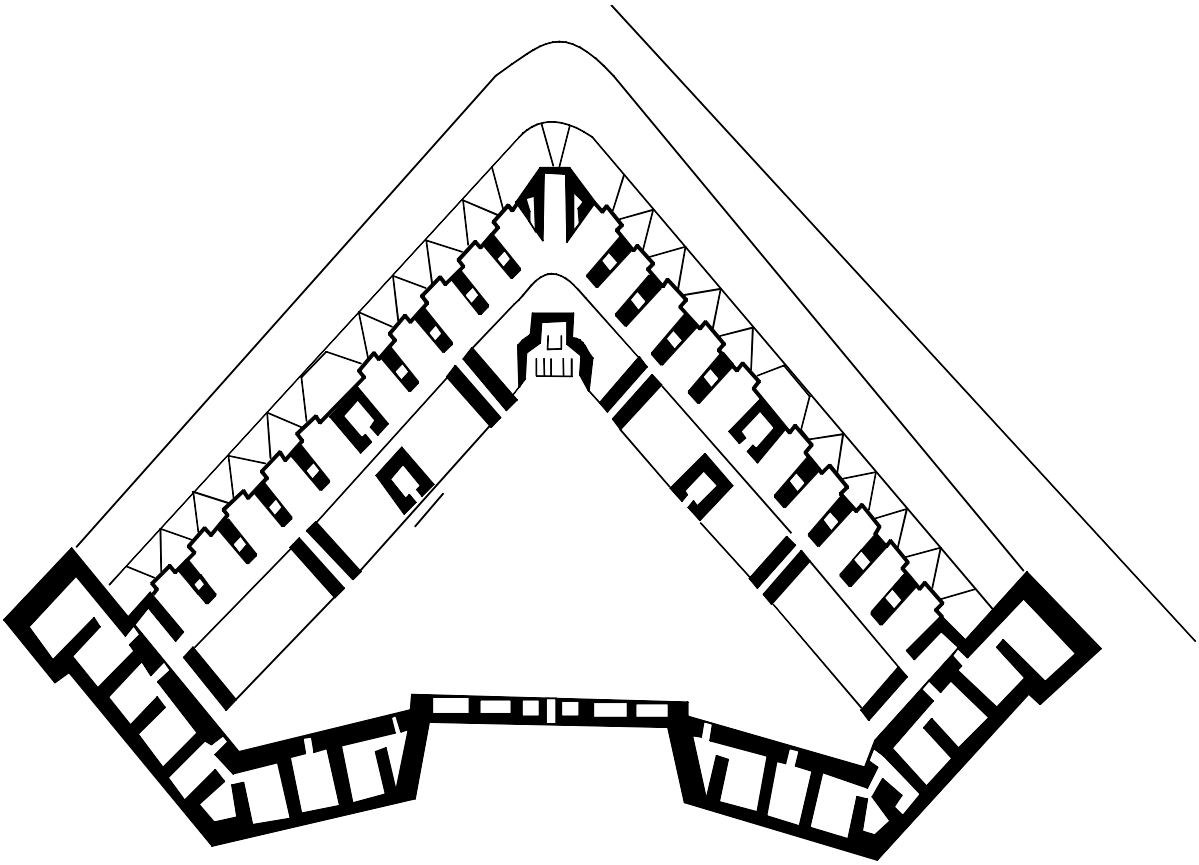

Fort Victoria in 1967