

South Hook Fort (Battery)

Commenced	12 December 1859
Completed	3 March 1865
Cost	£ c46,183
Map Reference	SM 870055
Position	Herbrandston
Type	Coast battery with defensible barracks
Ditch	Dry
Guns	20 (initially)
Barrack Accom.	8 officers 152 men
Present use	Vacant

History	Coast battery & oil refinery Sold by WO in 1936
Disposal	Bought by Esso in 1950's
Condition	Fair
Access	With permission from Esso

Sources	1858 & 1868 Committee Reports, Precis of Correspondence prior to 1893 National Archives.
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Armament

C 1870-1886	
Western Battery	15 x 7-inch RML
Eastern Battery	5 x 9-inch RML
1893 Mounted	1 x 10-inch BL 3 x 10-inch RML 4 x 9-inch RML
1904	1 x 9.2-inch BL Mark X 3 x 6-inch BL Mark VII 3 x 12pr QF
1918 Mounted	2 x 6-inch BL Mark VII 1 X 12pr QF
1928-35	2 x 12pr QF
1935	Disarmed

Caponiers	2
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Counterscarp galleries	1
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Haxo casemates	None
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Moncrieff Pits	None
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History and description

The Fort sometimes referred to as a battery, was the result of the proposals of the 1858 Committee. It was some 80 to 100 feet above high water and was secured at the rear by a defensible barracks capable of mounting guns on its roof and connected to the batteries by a parapet and ditch on each side. The western battery mounted fifteen and the Eastern one five guns linked by a covered way. The barracks is a two storey building with a bomb proof roof; the outer wall some four feet thick forms a scarp 35 feet in height. Its outline is an arc culminating in two demi-bastions at the rear with two small caponiers covering the scarp wall. Just outside the rear of the barracks is an underground tunnel leading to the main magazine.

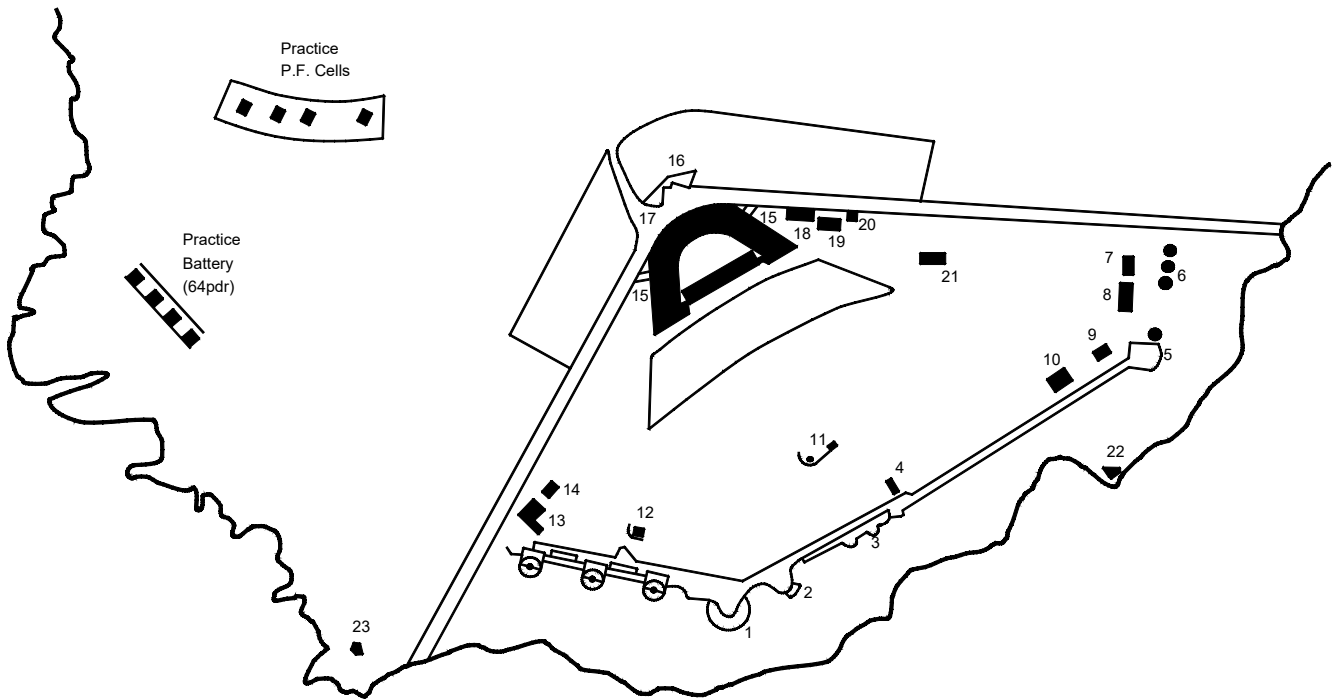
The Fort was the cornerstone of the Haven's defences until batteries were built at East and West Blockhouse; it was manned by regulars and militia and in 1886 was used during the Milford Haven Experiment, an exercise to assess the effectiveness of the minefield, searchlights and guns to defend a commercial port.

In 1886 it was reported: *The guns in the 15 gun battery are weak and crowded. 2 x 10inch BL should be mounted in place of group no.s IV, V, VI and 3 x 10inch RML in place of group No.s VII, VIII, IX. Pending the supply of the BL guns 10inch RML should be mounted in their place. The traverses and cartridge stores require to be remodelled.* The 10inch BL was agreed in 1887. The western fifteen gun battery was demolished in 1889 and replaced by batteries for two 10 inch BL and three 10 inch RML guns however only one B.L. gun was mounted. These batteries were replaced between 1900 and 1904 by ones for three 6-inch and a 9.2 inch BLs. At the western end of the covered way a battery was built for three 6pdr QF between 1897 and 1898 but these guns were never mounted, instead the battery was adapted to take two 12pdr QF. The Fort was used in 1890 to evaluate a 10 inch BL gun on a Royal Carriage Department mounting. The Owen Report declared the 9.2 inch gun superfluous so in 1907 it was dismantled and sent to West Blockhouse to replace a gun there that had developed choke.

During the First World War a 6-inch gun was removed from the Fort and a 12pdr QF was withdrawn; sometime between 1919 and 1928 the two remaining 6-inch guns were dismantled and sent to West Blockhouse. Finally in July 1935 the two 12pdr QF guns were dismantled and sent to East Blockhouse to form a practice battery on the left flank of the 9.2 inch battery. At the present time the barracks remain secured, as do the gun emplacements though these are overgrown.

In 1914 there was an examination battery at the Fort during the war. The Fort was sold in 1936 however it was requisitioned at the beginning of the Second World War and became HMS Skirmisher operated by WRENS controlling all Naval movements in the Haven. In the late 1950's the Esso Petroleum Company purchased the Fort and built an oil refinery however the future of the site remains uncertain as the refinery has been demolished. In October 2005 the fort was empty, but secure. The fort has recently been completely surrounded by a new liquid gas storage facility and it is not completely inaccessible, although the sea battery emplacements can be partially viewed from the coast path.

South Hook Fort



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 9.2-inch B.L. Gun 2. 10-inch R.M.L. 3. 6 & 12pdr Q.F. Battery 4. P.F.Cell 6. 5/4 Gun Battery (9-inch R.M.L.) 7. R.E. Store 8. Gyn & Tackle Store 9. Wheeler's Store | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Master Gunner's Quarters 11. D.R.F. Pillar & telephone Room 12. B.C. Post & E.L. Director 13. Latrines 14. Smith's Shop 15. Caponier 16. Counterscarp gallery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Entrance 18. Machine Gun Shed 19. Accumulator Room 20. Gyn & Tackle Store 21. Gun Shed 22. No.2 Electric Light 23. No.1 Electric Light |
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