Tilbury Fort

**Commenced**
(1540) 1861 - 1905 re-armament

**Completed**

**Cost**
£

**Map Reference**
TQ 552755

**Position**
North bank of the Thames at Tilbury

**Type**
Bastioned land front with sea battery

**Ditch**
Wet

**Guns**
161 in 1716

**Barrack Accom.**
Scheduled Ancient Monument

**Present use**
Continuously in use to present date

**History**

**Disposal**

**Condition**
Excellent

**Access**
Open to the public

**Sources**
Coast Defences of England and Wales - Hogg
Tilbury Fort - A handbook for teachers - Dale

**Armament**

Originally armed with 161 guns
1805 - 14 x 42pdr. S.B.
20 x 32 pdr. S.B.
35 x 9-pdr SB
1859 - reduced to 32 guns
1865 - 66 guns and eight howitzers,
   effective armament 5 x 68 pdr S.B.
   5 x 32pdr. S.B.
   4 x 10-inch S.B.
1872 - 1881 - 7 x 9-inch RML 1 x 11-inch RML
1905 2 x 6-inch B.L. 4 x 12pdr. QF

**Caponiers**
None

**Counterscarp galleries**
None

**Haxo casemates**
None

**Moncrieff Pits**
None

**History and Description**

Originally built on the orders of Henry VIII in about 1540, under Charles II it became a regular Fort, bastioned and fully armed, in 1667. The present Tilbury Fort was designed by the King’s Chief Engineer, Bernard de Gomme.

Under the orders of the 1859 Commissioners it was extended in 1861, a new magazine built and an 18-pounder field gun battery was installed. In 1865 the effective armament was reported as five 68-pounder smooth bore, five 32-pounder smooth-bore, and four 10-inch smooth-bore guns.

In 1866 Parliament was asked for £50,000 in order to strengthen the river defences and add iron shields, but the Bill was withdrawn. By 1867 the Director of Ordnance was able to report that work was now in progress for re-arming Tilbury with heavy rifled guns, but it was not until 1872 that the guns were installed in the river face, leaving the land side still armed with smooth-bores which remained in place until 1888.

General Gordon, a Royal Engineer, was appointed Commander, Royal Engineers, Sheerness in 1866. He became greatly concerned over the defences and under his urging new earthworks were built, to take brick emplacements for guns firing through embrasures to command the river, it seems that all the embrasures were not occupied though, since an 1880 return lists seven 9-inch and one 11-inch R.M.L. gun distributed through thirteen embrasures. By the time the Commission on the Armament of Home Ports reported in 1905 Tilbury had been provided with two 6in BL converted guns in the south-east bastion and four 12-pounder QF on the curtain, their concrete emplacements being built over earlier RML positions. These remained until after World War II.

Today Tilbury Fort is a scheduled Ancient Monument and is in excellent repair. Many of the SB, RML and later emplacements can be seen, some with racers and pivots still in place. It is open to the public and is one of the oldest coast defences to be maintained in substantially its original form.

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