

Drakes Island

Commenced	1860	Armament	
Completed	1864	Proposed	5 x 12-inch 21 x 9-inch RML
Cost	£ 62,108	1885 Revised armament	6 x 80pr RML 2 x 12-inch RML 3 x 11-inch RML 13 x 9-inch RML
Map Reference	SX 470528	1893 Lower Battery South West Face	6 x 80pr R.M.L. Main Battery 2 x 12-inch R.M.L. 3 x 11-inch R.M.L. 1 x 18pr SB for signalling
Position	Drakes Island, Sea Defences Inner Line.	Casemate Battery, South East casemate	10 x 9-inch R.M.L. Casemate Battery, East Casemate 3 x 9-inch R.M.L. Added 3 x 12pr QF Reduced 6 x 80pr RML 2 x 12-inch RML
Type	Casemated Coast battery	1899	3 x 11-inch 8 x 9-inch 4 x 6pr QF
Ditch	none	Caponiers	None
Guns	21	Counterscarp galleries	None
Barrack Accom.		Haxo casemates	None
Present use	Empty and unused	Moncrieff Pits	None
History			
Disposal	1995		
Condition	Fair		
Access	None		
Sources	Précis of Correspondence relating to the Defences of Plymouth prior to 1893		

History and Description

The Royal Commission of 1859 considered Drakes Island *to bear such an important part in the event of an attack from sea, both in the defence of the entrance into Hamoaze, the defence of The Sound and the support of the Citadel and all other works protecting the entrance to the harbour, that the necessity of strengthening the works on the island cannot be over-rated. The sea face of Drakes Island bears on the anchorage inside the breakwater at up to 2,200 yards range.*

In 1867 the combined committees considered a project for remodelling the existing upper battery at Drakes Island and mounting five powerful guns (23-ton) behind earthworks en barbette. *As this battery can only be engaged at long range until the enemy has passed the breakwater, they recommend the adoption of the proposal.* They considered the adoption of Moncrieff mountings.

The lower battery on Drakes Island was constructed as a casemated battery for 21 x 12-ton guns protected by iron shields although in 1880 the Defence Committee noted that some of the shields had not yet been fitted. It had a large magazine in the rear connecting to expense magazines immediately behind the passage to the rear of the casemates. The roof of the battery was designed for a barbette battery consisting of five of the heaviest available guns. This was altered to allow the use of Moncrieff guns but no guns were ever fitted as the upper battery was struck from the proposals.

In 1885 the R.A. and R.E.Works Committee reported on the revision of armament to meet modern conditions stating that at Drakes Island *the gun detachments in main battery are too exposed. The parapets to be raised and carriages adopted to some under-cover loading system. The vacant casemates need not be armed.*

The island provided accommodation for officers and men in purpose built barrack blocks. The western QF battery was commenced in 1897 and completed in 1898 for three 12pdr QF guns. The guns remained through WWI when one was removed. The other two were held in reserve until 1930 and were removed in 1942 and replaced by a twin-six built on the westernmost emplacement. The 6-inch BL battery for three guns was commenced in 1900 and completed in 1901. The western gun was removed by 1930. All emplacements survive intact. The eastern QF battery directly above the casemated battery was approved in 1900 and completed in 1901 for three 12pr QF guns.

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