

Culver Down Battery

Commenced	3 May 1904	Armament	
Completed	21 July 1906	1906 - 1922	2 x 9.2-inch Mark X B.L. on Barbette V
Cost	£ Unknown	1922 - 1956	2 x 9.2-inch Mark X B.L. Barbette VI
Map Reference	SZ 638855		
Position	South Wight, Eastern edge Culver Cliff		
Type	Coast Defence battery		
Ditch	Twydall profile		
Guns	2		
Barrack Accom.	None		
Present use	Car park and viewing point		
History	Anti-bombardment battery. PWSS. Chain Home Low Radar Station	Caponiers	None
Disposal		Counterscarp galleries	None
Condition	Fair, recently excavated (1996)	Haxo casemates	None
Access	Open site - National Trust	Moncrieff Pits	None
Sources	Precis of Correspondence - 1893, Sandown Bay Defences - A.Cantwell		

History and Description

In 1887 it was proposed to build a battery at Culver Cliff to prevent ships from enfilading the batteries at Yaverland and Redcliff, It was to be armed with three 6-inch B.L. guns on H.P. mountings with two Q.F. guns in support. In 1889 it was decided that the Q.F. guns be replaced with 4.7-inch guns but still the battery was not built. In 1904-06 a battery was constructed near the eastern edge of Culver Cliff. It consisted of two 9.2-inch B.L. Mark X guns on barbette V mountings. The report of Major-General Dalton in 1906 stated *this important new work is now nearing completion it only requires a set of 1.8-inch accumulator pipes for A/2. Autosights and cams will no doubt arrive in due course. The ammunition for these guns is stored at Bembridge Fort. The position Finding cell is well advanced.* The magazines were constructed, as usual for such batteries, between the two emplacements, underground. The rear was closed with an unclimbable fence and formed into a Twydall Profile. 9.2-inch guns in such a position were not intended to cover Sandown bay but to act as anti-bombardment defences for Spithead. The battery command post was combined in the same building with the Port War Signal Station, between the battery and Bembridge Fort to the north.

In 1922-4 the Mark V mountings at Culver were replaced by Mark VI which allowed elevations to 30 degrees and longer range. The Fortress Plotting system of rangefinding was tried out there experimentally in 1927. In 1934 three 6-inch B.L. mark VII guns were temporarily fitted on 45 degree mountings for long range trials. In 1939 its armament was listed as 2 9.2-inch B.L. guns to cover Sandown Bay and assist Nodes Point to prevent long range bombardment of Spithead and Portsmouth Dockyard over a range of 17,000 yards. Its night role was ended in 1942. By then a CD/CHL radar station had been built east of Culver Battery on the cliff edge. In 1947 two 6-inch BL Mark 24 high angle guns in turrets were erected in front of the 9.2-inch B.L.s for practice shoots with radar dishes on the roof of the Port War Signal Station. Two 3.7-inch AA guns were also used for coast artillery practice. In 1956 all guns were removed and the site sold off.

The final use of the battery is as a viewing point and public picnic area. The battery was completely filled with earth with only the apron of the pits remaining visible. In 1966 they were excavated and they are now accessible once more. The buildings of the PWSS and those that formed the administrative and maintenance parts of the battery have been demolished, the sites levelled out and turned into carparks. The concrete access road to the gun positions still survives.

Culver Down Battery

- 1 Ablution Room
- 2 W.C.
- 3 Urinal
- 4 Coal, Oil & Paint Store
- 5 Artillery General Store
- 6 Ablution
- 7 Shelter
- 8 Filled Shell Room
- 9 Magazine
- 10 Filled Shell Room
- 11 Group Store
- 12 Lamp Room

