

No Man's Land Fort

Commenced	July 1861 & March 1865
Completed	March 1880
Cost	£ 462,500
Map Reference	SZ 639938
Position	In the sea at Spithead, Eastern approaches to Portsmouth Harbour
Type	Sea Fort, circular, casemated iron/granite
Ditch	None, in the sea
Guns	49 in two tiers plus roof
Barrack Accom.	5 Officers, 72 soldiers + hammocks
Present use	High security conference centre
History	In active use by the military up to 1957
Disposal	1987 sold to a developer
Condition	Restored/converted to modern use
Access	By arrangement with Solent Forts
Sources	Solent Papers No 1 'Spitbank and the Spithead Forts' G. Mitchell and A. Cantwell & 'The Redan' No.28

Armament

1886 - Mounted

Lower - 12 x 12.5-inch RML

Upper - 12 x 10-inch RML

1893 - Mounted

Lower - 8 x 12.5-inch R.M.L., 4 x 12-inch B.L.

Upper - 9 x 10-inch R.M.L. 4 x 12-inch B.L.

1898 - Mounted

Lower - 8 x 12.5-inch R.M.L., 4 x 12-inch B.L. 12 x 6pdr.QF Upper - 9 x 10-inch R.M.L. 4 x 12-inch B.L. 12 x 6pdr.QF

1912 - Mounted

3 x 6-inch BL guns, 3 x 12-inch BL (12-inch removed 1918)

1925 - Mounted

Roof - 2 x 6-inch BL

1943-45 Mounted

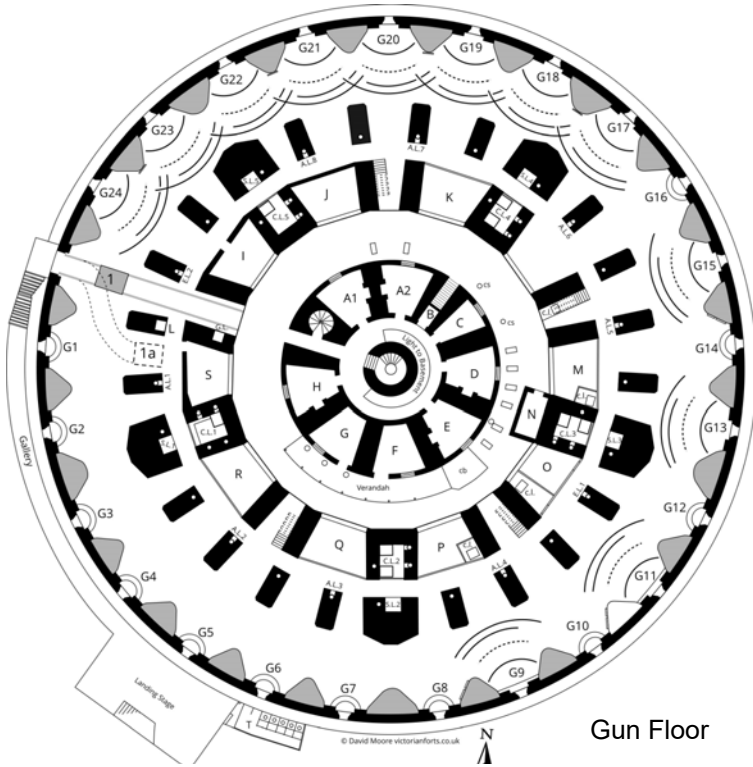
40mm Bofors 1948 & 1951 all remaining guns removed.

History and Description

No Man's Land Fort is identical in most respects to its twin, Horse Sand Fort and the description for that fort will suffice also for No Man's Land. Minor difference in the armaments of the two forts reflected their different positions in the eastern approaches to the harbour. Various proposals were made and tests carried out to find a more efficient method of loading and firing the heavy guns. In July 1877 tests were carried out on hydraulic machinery for loading and firing one of the 12.5-inch 38-ton guns. An average time over four rounds from load to ready was 2 minutes 11 seconds. In July 1880 the Inspector General of Fortifications declared No Man's Land and Horse Sand Forts to be complete and satisfactory works, but unarmed. The lower batteries had been completed for the 12.5-inch gun but the supply of guns and carriages had been postponed pending the possibility of the introduction of a BL gun. In 1882 the armament was revised to allow for four 12-inch 45-ton BL guns on each tier. In 1886 mounted on No Man's Land Fort were twelve 12.5-inch 38-ton guns and twelve 10-inch 18-ton guns, all bearing on the deep-water channel. It was reported that none of the 38-ton guns could be fired with full service charges because the shorter 6ft. recoil carriage had to be used owing to the lack of space. In May 1887 eight emplacements for the 45-ton BL guns on No Man's Land Fort were proposed but were said to be in a backward state. Between 1889 and 1895, on No Man's Land Fort experiments were carried out to operate the 12-inch guns by hydraulic machinery. Under the supervision of Maguire Bates, Inspector of Iron Structures, machinery was installed that could supply power for raising ammunition from the basement and loading it into the gun. Traversing and elevating was also achieved hydraulically, making it the first Fort in England, perhaps Europe to utilize hydraulic or other power for such a purpose. It was also the first to be lighted throughout by electricity. By 1898 6pdr. QF guns were added to the main armament. In 1902 a 4.7-inch QF gun was installed on top of the Fort as an examination gun. A 1906 inspection revealed that No Man's Land Fort had only one of the three proposed 6-inch guns mounted. By 1925 two 6-inch guns were still in place. In 1943 it was armed with a 40mm bofors which was removed in 1945. The fort was scheduled as an Ancient monument in 1967 and was finally released by the military in 1987.

No Man's Land Fort was bought by a developer who converted it into a luxury residence but failed to find a millionaire buyer. It was next owned by a business consortium who had plans to convert it to a high security conference centre. This scheme failed and in 2012 Clarenco, who converted Spitbank Fort to a luxury retreat, announced that they had purchased No Man's Land Fort. It has been restored and converted to modern use with the development of 30 bedrooms, a sauna, various games rooms, and several meeting and dining spaces. All three forts form the "Solent Forts" and access to No Man's Land Fort is by boat from Gun Wharf Quays at Portsmouth. In 2019 Clare put all three of his Solent Forts back on the market.

No Man's Land Fort



Gun Floor

