

= Oliver 's Battery (Tresco) =

Oliver 's Battery is a ruined artillery battery on the island of Tresco in the Isles of Scilly . It was built by the Parliamentary admiral , Sir Robert Blake , after he invaded Tresco in April 1651 during the years of the interregnum . It was used to bombard the neighbouring island of St Mary 's , which was still held by an opposing Royalist army , and forced its surrender several weeks later . The battery comprised a triangle of ramparts , constructed using earth and rubble , which , combined with the natural stone features on the site , produced a substantial , if crude , fortification . It is now ruined , and owned by the Duchy of Cornwall .

= = History = =

= = = 17th century = = =

Oliver 's Battery was built in the interregnum following the English Civil War . The Isles of Scilly had supported Charles I during the conflict between 1642 to 1646 , and , after a short period in Parliamentary control , the islands rebelled in favour of Charles in 1648 . The islands became a base for Royalist privateers , and Parliament became concerned that the Dutch , then hostile to England , might counter the piracy by occupying the islands , gaining a foothold that they could then use against England . In 1651 Parliament sent Sir Robert Blake in charge of a naval task force to retake the islands .

Blake arrived in April 1651 and set about invading the island of Tresco . Taking the harbour of Old Grimsby in an amphibious assault on 18 April , he then bypassed the northern fortress of King Charles 's Castle and marched south , intending to use Tresco as a base for taking the neighbouring island of St Mary 's , approximately 2 kilometres (1 @. @ 2 mi) away .

When Blake reached Carn Near on the south end of Tresco , he constructed an artillery position for a battery of three guns overlooking the channel between the island and St Mary 's , as well as the harbour of St Mary 's Pool , hoping to pressure the Royalists into surrender . The work was carried out rapidly between 19 April and 4 May , possibly reusing the site of a Bronze Age burial cairn . When the battery began firing on 4 May , one of the guns exploded causing two deaths , but the bombardment soon recommenced and St Mary 's agreed to surrender several weeks later on 23 May .

= = = 18th ? 21st centuries = = =

The antiquarian William Borlase visited the site in 1752 , which he thought was a breastwork defence named after the Parliamentary leader Oliver Cromwell . He remarked on how its construction was " irregular and uneven " , and suspected that it was very old , pre @-@ dating the civil war . He also noted how its position would have allowed it to protect the location he believed the Parliamentary forces had used as their camp , and commented as to how the winds and tides would have forced Royalist ships entering or leaving St Mary 's harbour to sail into close range of its guns .

The blockhouse is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall and it is protected as a scheduled monument under UK law . The site was surveyed in 1990 by the Cornwall Archaeology Unit , and in 2009 by English Heritage .

= = Design = =

Oliver 's Battery is on a hill overlooking the island of St Mary 's to the south @-@ east . It is triangular in shape , the sides of which are roughly 25 metres by 30 metres by 30 metres (82 ft by 98 ft by 98 ft) in length . The battery was entered from its north @-@ western side , and in the north @-@ east corner there was a small building , approximately 6 metres by 3 @. @ 5 metres (20 ft by

11 ft) , which may have been a store or a temporary gun magazine . The artillery pieces were located in the south @-@ eastern corner of the battery , where a gun platform , 7 metres (23 ft) in diameter , occupied the highest part of the fortification .

The battery is surrounded by an earth and rubble bank , incorporating natural outcrops of stone , between 4 @.@ 5 metres and 8 metres (15 ft and 26 ft) wide , and 2 metres (6 ft 7 in) high externally . On the west and south sides the ramparts are protected by a ditch , typically 4 @.@ 5 metres (15 ft) m wide and 0 @.@ 6 metres (2 ft 0 in) deep . The historian Mark Bowden considers the fortification to be " substantial but relatively crude " , probably a result of the speed with which the building work was carried out .

At the bottom of the hill beside the battery are two rectangular earthworks , 16 metres by 8 metres (52 ft and 26 ft) , and 26 metres and 12 metres (85 ft and 39 ft) . Traditionally these have been thought to be Royalist gun batteries pre @-@ dating the construction of Oliver 's Battery , but recent scholarship casts doubt on this , suggesting that they are instead the remains of hollow ways and sand pits .