

= Hurst Castle =

Not to be confused with Hearst Castle , a resort built in the US by wealthy newspaper magnate , William Randolph Hearst .

Hurst Castle is an artillery fort established by Henry VIII on the Hurst Spit in Hampshire , between 1541 and 1544 . It formed part of the King 's Device programme to protect against invasion from France and the Holy Roman Empire , and defended the western entrance to the Solent waterway . The early castle had a central keep and three bastions , and in 1547 was equipped with 26 guns . It was expensive to operate due to its size , but it formed one of the most powerful forts along the coast . During the English Civil War of the 1640s , Hurst was held by Parliament and was used briefly to detain King Charles I before his execution in 1648 . It continued in use during the 18th century but fell into disrepair , the spit being frequented by smugglers .

Repairs were made during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars with France , and the castle was modernised to enable it hold 24 @-@ pounder (10 @.@ 8 kg) guns . Fresh fears of invasion followed in the 1850s , leading to heavier , 32 @-@ pounder (14 @.@ 5 kg) armament being installed and new gun batteries being laid out on both sides of the castle . Technological developments rapidly made these defences obsolete , however , and a fresh phase of work between 1861 and 1874 created sixty @-@ one gun positions in two long , granite @-@ faced batteries alongside the older castle . These held very heavy weapons , including massive 12 @.@ 5 inch , 38 ton (317 mm , 39 @,@ 000 kg) rifled muzzle @-@ loading guns . As the century progressed , these too became outdated and lighter , quick @-@ firing guns were installed at the castle to replace them .

The castle formed part of a network of defences around the entrance to the Solent during the First World War , and was re @-@ armed again during the Second World War . The military decommissioned the fort in 1956 and it passed into the control of the Ministry of Works . In the 21st century , it is run jointly by English Heritage and the Friends of Hurst Castle as a tourist attraction , receiving around 40 @,@ 000 visitors during 2015 . Coastal erosion has become a growing problem despite government intervention to protecting the spit . Four lighthouses have been built at Hurst from the 18th century onwards , one of which , a high lighthouse first opened in 1867 , remains in active service .

= = History = =

= = = 16th century = = =

Hurst Castle was built as a consequence of international tensions between England , France and the Holy Roman Empire in the final years of the reign of King Henry VIII . Traditionally the Crown had left coastal defences to local lords and communities , only taking a modest role in building and maintaining fortifications , and while France and the Empire remained in conflict , maritime raids were common but an actual invasion of England seemed unlikely . Modest defences based around simple blockhouses and towers existed in the south @-@ west and along the Sussex coast , with a few more impressive works in the north of England , but in general the fortifications were limited in scale . Worsley 's Tower , for example , built opposite the future site of Hurst Castle in the 1520s , was too small to hold powerful artillery and considered by surveyors in 1539 to be " one of the worst devised things " they had seen .

In 1533 , Henry broke with Pope Paul III over the annulment of his long @-@ standing marriage to Catherine of Aragon . Catherine was the aunt of Charles V , the Holy Roman Emperor , who took the annulment as a personal insult . This resulted in France and the Empire declaring an alliance against Henry in 1538 , and the Pope encouraging the two countries to attack England . An invasion of England appeared certain . In response , Henry issued an order , called a " device " , in 1539 , giving instructions for the " defence of the realm in time of invasion " and the construction of forts along the English coastline .

Hurst Castle was designed to protect the western entrance to the Solent , a body of water that led from the English Channel to the naval base at Portsmouth and , through Southampton Water , to the important port of Southampton . The castle was one of four fortifications that William Fitzwilliam , the Lord Admiral , and William Paulet recommended building to strengthen the defences along the Solent ; the others were at East and West Cowes , and Calshot . It was positioned on the Hurst Spit , a strip of shingle sheltering saltmarsh and mud flats , only 0 @. @ 75 miles (1 @. @ 21 km) across the water from the Isle of Wight . Temporary earthwork fortifications were erected on the site and , after the other three castles had been completed , work then began on Hurst in 1541 under the direction of John Mille , the financial controller , and probably Thomas Bertie , a master mason . Bertie was appointed as the castle 's captain in 1542 and the work was completed by January 1544 , at a cost of over £ 3 @, @ 200 .

The result was a stone artillery fort with a central keep and three bastions , surrounded by a moat , capable of holding up to 71 guns . In 1547 , however , Hurst was equipped with 26 artillery pieces ? four made of brass and the remainder iron ? comprising a two sakers , a culverin , a demi @- @ cannon , a curtall cannon , two demi @- @ culverins , six portpieces , four slings , two quarter @- @ slings , and seven bases , three of them inoperable . A 1559 survey commented that Hurst Castle was essential for sending reinforcements from the mainland to the island , and noted that it was equipped with eleven brass and iron guns , with nine further broken guns , along with handguns , bows and arrows , pikes and bills . The survey observed that the castle was vulnerable to attack because it lacked flanking protection and had rounded walls , and that it was expensive to garrison because of its size , requiring a captain , his deputy , twelve gunners , nine soldiers and a porter . The historian John Kenyon notes , however , that its considerable armament made it one of the most powerful forts in the south , even if it was equipped with lighter guns than would have been ideal for its " ship @- @ killing " role .

Meanwhile , the invasion threat from France had passed and a lasting peace was made in 1558 ; government concerns shifted away from the south coast towards the Spanish threat to the south @- @ west of England . By 1569 , when Thomas Carew was serving as Hurst 's captain , there were less than ten guns but the same size of garrison to that seven years before . His son , Sir Thomas Gorges , became captain in turn , and in 1593 he reported that the castle 's gun platforms were in serious need of repair .

= = = 17th century = = =

In the early 1600s , England was at peace with France and Spain , and the country 's coastal defences received little attention . The Gorges family continued as captains at Hurst , with Sir Edward Gorges taking up the post in 1610 , but the castle was neglected . In 1628 , the castle was unable to prevent Flemish ships from passing along the Solent , as only four or five of the castle 's twenty @- @ seven guns were functional , and the fort had no ammunition or powder for them . The government replaced all the brass ordnance in the castle , which were preferred , particularly on ships , as they could fire faster and more safely , with iron guns in 1635 .

At the beginning of the English Civil War in 1642 between the supporters of Charles I and Parliament , the castle was occupied by Captain Richard Swanley , a supporter of Parliament . In December 1648 it was briefly used to detain the King before his trial and execution . During the interregnum , it remained in use under the command of Colonel Thomas Eyre and was reinforced in 1650 to deal with the threat of a Royalist invasion .

After Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 , Eyre was dismissed and replaced by Edward Strange . The future of the castle was uncertain ; Charles gave orders to demobilise the garrison and briefly considered having the fortress demolished altogether . Instead of maintaining a regular garrison , in 1666 it was decided to staff the castle using soldiers deployed from the Isle of Wight instead , from a unit belonging to Sir Robert Holmes , the island 's governor . Hurst had meanwhile fallen into disrepair , delaying the plans to deploy Holmes ' men until 1671 . Repairs were carried out and , by 1675 , a conventional garrison and almost thirty guns were stationed at Hurst .

== 18th century ==

Hurst Castle continued to be used as a military base in the 18th century , but was also used to hold a Franciscan confessor , Father Paul Atkinson . Amid concerns over the moral condition of England and a perceived threat to the established Church , an act for " further preventing the growth of popery " was passed in 1700 ; Hurst was chosen by the Privy Council to house any priests convicted under this law . Atkinson was probably the only person detained in this way , and he was held for 29 years from 1700 onwards , before finally dying at the castle .

There had been reported problems with smuggling around Hurst Castle since the 1670s , and these continued into the 18th century . In 1729 , the Revenue service hired the Hurst , a wide , heavy yacht , to assist in anti @-@ smuggling operations out of Southampton , arming its crew with muskets , pistols and swords . The problems persisted and , later in the century , the site was used as a rendezvous for smugglers led by a notorious criminal called John Streeter .

The castle fell into neglect , and reports from the 1770s through into the early 1790s noted extensive problems , complaining that the fort 's guns could no longer be mounted on the dilapidated bastions and that water was seeping through the decaying walls . By 1793 , the castle was considered to be " in the worst condition " of all the forts along the coast , and all its guns were unusable . Repairs were authorised , but little was actually done . The spit around the castle began to be used by civilians , including fishermen and gardeners ; a lighthouse , called the Hurst Tower , was built there in 1786 , and the Shipwright 's Arms inn was established alongside the castle .

The Revolutionary War with France broke out in 1793 , leading to the extensive modernisation of the castle . Repairs were carried out in 1794 at a cost of £ 647 , followed by a review of the defences the next year by the Master @-@ General of the Ordnance . The 16th @-@ century castle was still strongly fortified by the standards of the time , but it could not support the heavier guns or batteries of artillery required to tackle enemy warships . Instead , two new gun batteries , each armed with five 36 @-@ pounder (16 @.@ 3 kg) guns , were built alongside the castle in 1795 , with a further eighteen 9 @-@ pounder (4 kg) guns mounted in the old fort ; the guns concerned had all been captured from the French .

== 19th century ==

=== 1800 ? 58 ===

In 1803 , war with France appeared imminent once again . After some discussions , it was agreed to adapt the 16th @-@ century keep to enable it to hold six 24 @-@ pounder (10 @.@ 8 kg) guns ; the roof was vaulted and a central stone pillar was installed to run up through the building , work estimated at the time to be likely to cost £ 4 @,@ 122 . The historian Andrew Saunders likens the resulting building to the various Martello towers being constructed along the south coast at this time . It was proposed to build two temporary gun batteries to replace the 1795 emplacements , which had suffered from the salt air and decayed , but the plan was turned down in order to focus attention on the redevelopment of the keep . The work was carried out by a mixture of soldiers and civilian contractors and was completed by the end of 1806 .

The remodelled castle did not play an active part in the Napoleonic Wars , although it was used in 1809 as a hospital for injured soldiers returning from the Peninsula Campaign in Spain . A second lighthouse , known as the High Lighthouse , was constructed alongside the castle in 1812 .

Official interest in Hurst Castle increased again in the 1840s , as the introduction of shell guns and steam ships created a new risk that the French might successfully attack along the south coast . Previously , sailing ships had been only able to pass the castle slowly when moving against the tide , making them vulnerable to its guns ; steam ships threatened to cruise past at speed . Military estimates and surveys in 1850 and 1851 suggested that the armament should therefore be significantly increased , to include more and much heavier guns .

Improvements were carried out between 1852 and 1856 at a cost of over £ 6 @,@ 725 . The keep

was adapted to support 32 @-@ pounder (14 @.@ 5 kg) guns , the seaward @-@ facing bastions and curtain walls were reinforced with brick casemates and new gun positions , and the moat was deepened to protect against any surprise attack . Two batteries were built to the west and east of the castle , protected by shingle and earth and linked to the old castle by covered passageways called caponiers ; a defensible barrack block was built beside the western battery , to provide further protection against any attack from the land . The result was that Hurst was re @-@ established as a powerful fortification , equipped with fourteen 32 @-@ pounder guns , fifteen 8 @-@ inch (203 mm) shell guns and two 32 @-@ pounder carronades ; in wartime , these required a team of 440 men , with a peacetime garrison of 105 soldiers . Fort Albert was built across the water on the Isle of Wight to provide supporting fire . The old inn was first reused as the garrison canteen and then demolished .

The 1852 , the Isle of Wight Electric Company laid a specially @-@ armoured telegraph cable to link the castle with Keyhaven on the mainland and Sconce Point on the island ; two years later , the Electric Telegraph Company linked the castle to Southampton . Hurst used flags to pass on telegraphic messages to and from shipping entering the Solent .

== = 1859 ? 99 = = = =

Rapid advances in military technology made the new defences became obsolete before the end of the decade . The introduction of rifled breech @-@ loading guns , capable of firing explosive shells , and the construction of armour @-@ plated warships left Hurst 's guns and fortifications inadequate . Fears grew in 1859 that France might invade England , potentially in a surprise attack . A 1859 Royal Commission recommended that Hurst , as one of the key forts protecting Portsmouth , should be upgraded as a matter of priority .

Hurst was equipped with new heavy , RML guns in heavily protected casemated positions . These weapons were slow to reload , so to ensure that the castle would have a good chance of hitting enemy ships passing at speed , two long batteries of weapons were built onto either side of the old castle , a west wing with 37 gun positions and an east wing with 24 positions . These were built on top of the two gun batteries constructed there a few years before and also required the castle 's moat to be filled in . As work progressed , the decision was taken to reinforce the batteries with additional iron shields .

The work eventually cost £ 211 @,@ 000 ; it began in 1861 , with the majority of the work being completed by 1870 and the additional iron shielding by 1874 . In peacetime , the castle held around 131 officers and men but it would have needed to be substantially reinforced during wartime if all the weapons were to be manned . Although the fort never received its full complement of guns , by 1881 it had ten 12 @.@ 5 inch , 38 ton (317 mm , 39 @,@ 000 kg) rifled muzzle @-@ loading (RML) guns , fifteen 10 inch , 18 ton (254 mm , 18 @,@ 000 kg) RML guns , five 9 inch , 12 ton (228 mm , 12 @,@ 000 kg) RML guns , and 3 64 @-@ pounders (29 kg) , together forming a powerful arsenal .

Two new lighthouses were constructed in the 1860s . The first was the " Low Light " built into the rear wall of the west wing of the castle . The second lighthouse was the " High Light " ? the free standing Hurst Point Lighthouse built on the end of Hurst Spit between 1865 and 1867 . A new public house , the Castle Inn , was established on the north end of the spit . A narrow @-@ gauge railway was constructed in the 1880s to move supplies into the castle .

By the 1880s and 1890s , both the power of naval artillery and the speed of warships had further increased , leading to further investment in the castle between 1888 and 1893 . The keep 's magazine , which could hold up to 2 @,@ 250 shells , was reinforced with concrete and the south bastion of the old castle was filled in with shingle and concrete for additional protection . New 6 @-@ pounder (2 @.@ 7 kg) quick @-@ firing guns were installed in a battery on the end of the east wing , supported by machine guns , to enable them to target fast moving vessels , particularly the new torpedo boats . Further emplacements for 12 @-@ pounder (5 @.@ 4 kg) guns followed , including one on the top of the keep .

== 20th @-@ 21st centuries ==

By the First World War , the guns installed at Hurst Castle in the 1870s were obsolete . The castle retained seventeen of them , as historian Coad states , wired up together " like a collection of elderly blunderbusses " , but the fort depended on its newer quick @-@ firing weapons . During the war , Hurst 's armament was controlled from Needles Battery , where a Fire Command Post , equipped with telegraphy , had been established . After the war , the guns were removed from the 16th @-@ century part of the castle , which was passed into the national collection of the Ministry of Works in 1933 , although some modernisation of the rest of the fortification took place in the 1930s . The " low light " was replaced by a new iron lighthouse in 1911 .

During the Second World War , Hurst was re @-@ armed in 1940 with two 12 @-@ pounder (5 @. @ 4 kg) guns and a unit of the Isle of Wight Rifles was stationed there , controlled from the Fire Control Needles . Searchlights and two more 6 @-@ pounder (5 @. @ 4 kg) guns followed the next year , when the 37 @-@ strong detachment was retitled the 129 Coastal Battery Royal Artillery , followed by the installation of Bofors anti @-@ aircraft guns . A tower , called the Director Tower , was built along the west wing . As the war progressed , the weapons were stood down and the battery finally closed in July 1945 , with most of the weapons being removed after the war .

In 1956 the whole of Hurst Castle was transferred to the guardianship of the Ministry of Works . During the 1970s , the additional concrete protection added to the south bastion in the 1880s was removed . When the government agency English Heritage was formed in 1983 , it took over the control of the castle . In 1996 the Friends of Hurst Castle took on the day @-@ to @-@ day management of the castle , with English Heritage continuing to run other aspects of the site . As of 2015 , the castle received around 40 @, @ 000 visitors a year . The castle is protected under UK law as an ancient monument . The High Lighthouse built in 1867 continues in use , and is protected as a grade II listed building .

The spit is subject to coastal erosion which has gradually pushed the spit towards the shore , a process which has eaten away at the remnants of the 1852 west wing battery and barracks , and has exposed the foundations of the later fortress on occasions . This erosion has increased significantly since the 1940s , due to the construction of groyne barriers at nearby Bournemouth and Christchurch which prevented the natural renewing of the spit with pebbles washed from local cliffs . Erosion caused fresh damage to the eastern end of the castle in early 2013 , leading to renewed concerns . Government efforts began in the 1960s to try to stabilise the spit in its current position , both to protect the castle and neighbouring towns , with over 900 @, @ 000 tonnes (990 @, @ 000 tons) of gravel being laid down in the 1990s , and is continuing in the 21st century . The spit and the adjoining coastline is protected as an SSSI .

== Architecture ==

== Central castle ==

The central castle was originally constructed in the 16th century , but heavily redeveloped in the early and middle years of the 19th century . It comprises a central tower with three bastions to its north @-@ west , north @-@ east and south , approximately 52 metres (171 ft) across . A curtain wall with gun positions originally linked the three bastions , but this was substantially altered with the addition of walls and chambers to produce a deeper structure . The central castle forms the entrance to the rest of the fortification and is accessed through a gateway dating from 1873 . The 16th @-@ century moat that protected the castle was filled in during the 1860s .

The twelve @-@ sided central tower , or keep , is approximately 20 metres (66 ft) across ; it has two storeys and a basement . The inside of the tower is circular , with a spiral staircase running up through a central pillar . The ground floor and first floor rooms would have originally been sub @-@ divided to form living quarters for the garrison , but are now open spaces . Both have eight embrasure windows , suitable for holding lighter weaponry ; the first floor room was sufficiently

elevated to have potentially fired out over the external walls . The roof has the remains of gun positions dating from the 1850s , and was originally topped by a look @-@ out tower , removed in 1805 . When first built , the keep was linked by three bridges to the outer bastions .

The two @-@ storied north @-@ west bastion protected the castle against attack along the spit from the mainland , and housed the castle 's original portcullis as well as providing accommodation for the garrison . It had three levels of gun positions on its ground floor , first floor and roof , which were adapted in the 19th century to house heavier weapons and shelter riflemen . The bastion links to an external caponier , a covered walkway with rifle loops for close defence , built in 1852 . The north @-@ east and south @-@ east bastions are only one storey tall , originally holding two levels of gun positions on the ground floor and roofs , again both adapted to support heavier guns in the 19th century .

= = = West and East Wings = = =

The West and East Wing date from the 1860s and are built from brick and stone . They had a lines of gun positions , each designed to hold a heavy gun and a crew of up to 12 men . The positions were protected by granite @-@ fronted casemates and wrought @-@ iron shields , and , with removable window screens , doubled as living accommodation for the crews . Small magazines were positioned behind the lines of casemates .

The West Wing is approximately 215 metres (705 ft) long , and has 37 heavy gun positions and two main magazines , along with various auxiliary buildings , including canteens , stores and detention facilities . It also has two of the castle 's lighthouses , an 1865 tower , now disused , and an iron , gas @-@ lit tower , still in use . The garden is a recreation of the garden in the Second World War . The late @-@ 19th century and early @-@ 20th guns at the castle were predominantly added to the West Wing , and it roof supports emplacements for 12- and 6 @-@ pounder (5 @-@ 4 and 2 @-@ 7 kg) quick @-@ firing guns , a Bofors gun and associated directing positions . A small theatrical theatre , built by gunners in the Second World War , survives in one of the gun positions , along with various wall paintings , possibly used in performances .

The East Wing is relatively unaltered since its construction . It is approximately 150 metres (490 ft) long , with 24 heavy gun positions and two main magazines ; on the roof is the original gun directing position and a Bofors gun position added during the Second World War . It is reached through a gateway in the north @-@ east bastion . Just beyond the East Wing are three 6 @-@ pounder quick @-@ firing gun emplacements from 1893 , which were fed ammunition from the wing through a hole in the outer wall .