

= East and West Blockhouses =

The East and West Blockhouses were Device Forts built by King Henry VIII in 1539 to protect the harbour of Milford Haven in Wales . The two blockhouses were positioned on either side of the Milford Haven Waterway in the villages of Angle and Dale respectively , overlooking the sea . The East Blockhouse was never completed , but the remains were reused as a defensive site in the Second World War . The West Blockhouse was described by contemporaries as forming a round tower with gunports , but it was demolished when West Blockhouse Fort was built on the same site in the 19th century .

= = Background = =

The two blockhouses were 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 the local lords and communities , only taking a modest role in building and maintaining fortifications , and with France and the Empire in conflict with one another , 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 very limited in scale .

In 1533 , Henry broke with Pope Paul III to annul the long @-@ standing marriage to his wife , Catherine of Aragon , and remarry . Catherine was the aunt of Charles V , the Holy Roman Emperor , and he 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 now appeared certain .

= = Construction = =

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 . Soon afterwards work began on the East Blockhouse in the village of Angle . Angle overlooked the mouth of Milford Haven harbour in Pembrokeshire ; another fortification , the West Blockhouse , was built just across the other side of the Milford Haven Waterway at Dale .

The East Blockhouse was constructed on a narrow headland 35 metres ( 115 ft ) above the sea ; the Elizabethan historian George Owen described the building as having been intended to be a " rounde turrett " , and the physical remains in the 20th century comprised a 7 @. 3 by 4 @. 0 metres ( 24 @. 0 by 13 @. 1 ft ) stone building , with a stone enclosure to the north and a subsidiary building 15 metres ( 49 ft ) away from the main site on the south @-@ east side . The construction work was never completed and by 1546 the walls had begun to collapse . According to Owen , the West Blockhouse was a round tower , 20 feet ( 6 @. 1 m ) in diameter , with eight gunports .

= = Later use = =

After peace was achieved with France in 1558 , military attention shifted towards the Spanish threat to the increasingly prosperous south @-@ west side of England . Tensions with Spain grew and invasion appeared likely in 1589 , resulting in royal permission being given to reuse the stonework from the East Blockhouse for new coastal defences , but this work was not carried out . The fort continued to decay until the 20th century . With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 , the East Blockhouse was adapted for use by the British military . The interior was cleared out and a shed was built in one corner . A slit trench was dug on the north side of the building , a rifle embrasure formed on the east side of the building , and a machine @-@ gun position was dug out and protected with sandbags outside it .

Land erosion has damaged the East Blockhouse site ; the north wall collapsed before 1975 , and between 2010 and 2011 there was another major landslip . An archaeological survey of the blockhouse , funded by the Welsh heritage agency Cadw , took place in 2011 . The East Blockhouse is the only such defensive structure to survive in Wales and is protected under UK law as a scheduled monument .

The West Blockhouse was demolished in the 19th century , when West Blockhouse Fort was built on the same site , and there are no visible remains .