

= Calshot Castle =

Calshot Castle is an artillery fort constructed by Henry VIII on the Calshot Spit , Hampshire , England , between 1539 and 1540 . It formed part of the King 's Device programme to protect against invasion from France and the Holy Roman Empire and defend Southampton Water as it met the Solent . The castle had a keep at its centre , surrounded by a curtain wall and a moat . Initially heavily armed , it had a garrison of 16 men and as many as 36 artillery guns . The castle continued in use for many years , surviving the English Civil War intact and being extensively modernised in the 1770s . During the 19th century , Calshot Castle was used by the coastguard as a base for combating smuggling . In 1894 , however , fresh fears of a French invasion led to it being brought back into use as an artillery fort : a large coastal battery was constructed alongside the older castle and a boom built across Southampton Water , controlled from the castle .

During the First World War , Calshot Castle was primarily used as a base for seaplanes , deployed on anti @-@ submarine patrols in the English Channel ; its guns were removed before the end of the war , probably for use in France . The air base , by then called RAF Calshot , grew in size during the inter @-@ war years , hosting the Schneider Trophy air races . With the outbreak of the Second World War , Calshot was re @-@ armed in the face of a possible German invasion . The station continued in use after the war , but as military seaplanes became obsolete , it was finally closed in 1961 . After a short period of use by the coastguard , the castle was opened to the public by English Heritage in the 1980s . Restored to its pre @-@ 1914 appearance , the castle received 5 @, @ 751 visitors in 2010 . Historic England considers Calshot a " well @-@ preserved example " of King Henry 's Device Forts .

= = History = =

= = = 16th century = = =

= = = = Construction = = = =

Calshot 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 .

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 .

Calshot Castle was designed to protect 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 forts that William Fitzwilliam , the Lord Admiral , and William Paulet decided to build to improve the defences along the Solent ; the others were at East and West Cowes , and Hurst . Calshot was constructed on the narrow Calshot Spit , overlooking the deep @-@ water channel running through into Southampton . Temporary earthwork defences and gun batteries were erected as an interim measure , but the castle itself was built quickly and finished

by the end of 1540 . It probably reused stone and lead from Bealieu and Netley abbeys , which had recently been closed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries .

The castle initially had a garrison of eight gunners , five soldiers and a lieutenant , under the command of a captain . In the late 1540s , it was heavily armed by the standards of the time , with 36 pieces of artillery . In the 1580s , the castle caught fire and the timber needed for the repairs required 127 trees to be sent from the New Forest . The work was carried out in 1584 , prompted by the threat of a Spanish invasion , but by that time its garrison had shrunk to eight men .

== 17th ? 19th centuries ==

In the early 1600s , England was at peace with France and Spain and coastal defences received little attention . During the English Civil War of the 1640s , Calshot was held by Parliamentary forces against King Charles I , and protected with a 15 @-@ strong garrison at an annual cost of £ 107 . Parliament considered the fortress important and kept it supplied with ammunition ; unlike several other local forts , Parliament kept the castle operational , probably because of its ongoing role in defending Southampton Water . During the early 18th @-@ century War of Spanish Succession it was equipped with up to 25 guns .

The castle was modernised in the 1770s with a new parapet around the central keep , alterations to the gun embrasures around the outer wall and an expansion of the gatehouse with an additional set of rooms for the castle 's captain . Reports in 1793 , however , showed the castle 's guns to be in a poor condition and complained that the fortification was under the command of an infirm , elderly master @-@ gunner . Improvements were probably made at the start of the Revolutionary Wars that year , but in 1809 the geographer James Playfair described the castle as merely " a blockhouse with a garrison " . In 1804 , the castle was used to store munitions for the Sea Fencibles , fishing boats used as volunteer naval vessels to counter the threat of a French invasion . Seven guns were added to the castle 's arsenal to protect against French attack .

With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 , the government coastguard took control of the castle , using it as a base to combat smuggling , taking advantage of the water behind the Calshot Spit as a good location to position their waiting interception vessels . By the middle of the century , two officers and forty @-@ two men were stationed there . By the 1850s , there was renewed military interest in the site , and several proposals were made to redevelop it to mount as many 32 artillery guns ; the plans were not taken forward , and it was noted that the presence of the 16th @-@ century stone keep would create dangerous splinters in the event of any enemy artillery fire landing there . In 1887 , the Castle Yacht Club was established just beside the castle along the spit .

During the 1880s , concerns were raised that Southampton might be vulnerable to French attack using small ships armed with torpedoes . As a result , in 1894 the War Office took the castle back from the coastguard , building a boom across Southampton Water which was moved using three gunboats . The 16th @-@ century castle was too small to host a gun battery to protect the boom , so a larger battery was built south of the old castle in 1895 , armed with two 4 @.@ 7 @-@ inch (120 mm) and four 12 @-@ pounder (5 @.@ 4 kg) quick @-@ firing guns , supported by three searchlights mounted on the older castle walls . The boom was managed from two towers called " dolphins " , one just beside the castle and the other on the far side of the water , each with two 12 @-@ pounder quick @-@ firing guns of their own , in turn supported by machine guns . The creation of these defences ultimately forced the nearby yacht club to move to the southern end of the spit .

== 1900 ? 45 ==

In the first years of the 20th century , Calshot Castle 's defensive role continued unchanged . The castle 's keep was redesigned in 1907 to allow it to house two of the castle 's quick @-@ firing guns on its roof . A new , lighter " ladder " boom across Southampton Water was installed in 1907 , but within two years this approach had been replaced by a plan to block Southampton Water with a boom made up of floating hulks . A 1910 plan proposed that the castle would be garrisoned in

wartime by 10 officers and 154 men , 75 of whom would have to be housed nearby rather than in the fort itself ; additional naval personnel would also have been needed to man the support vessels for the boom . A Royal Naval Air Station was built alongside the castle in 1913 to house twelve experimental seaplanes which were intended to support the Royal Naval fleet operating along the Channel . Calshot was particularly suitable for seaplanes , as the surrounding waters and coastline were relatively quiet and calm .

The First World War broke out in 1914 , when military opinions on the utility of Calshot Castle had shifted considerably . The decision was taken to rely primarily on gun batteries at the two entrances to the Solent , rather than at Calshot and Southampton Water . At the start of conflict the boom was removed and replaced by anti @-@ submarine nets further up the coast ' two of Calshot 's guns were removed the following year to protect the new nets . The airbase was used for training purposes until 1916 , when it took on anti @-@ submarine patrols over the Channel , where the German raids had started to inflict critical damage . Almost 3 @, @ 500 hours were flown by aircraft from Calshot that year , with over 3 @, @ 500 being flown in 1917 and over 9 @, @ 000 in just three months of 1918 . Subordinate air stations were created in Bembridge , Newhaven , Polegate and Portland . A cabin was built on top of the keep to oversee air operations , the Castle Yacht Club was taken over for use as the officers ' mess and the air station spread out across Calshot Spit , including occupying the 1895 battery . Calshot 's remaining guns were removed and probably dispatched to the front line in France .

During the inter @-@ war years Calshot was taken over by the Royal Air Force , becoming RAF Calshot . It was used as the School for Naval Co @-@ operation and Aerial Navigation from 1918 onwards and began housing the Seaplane Training Squadron in 1931 . The 1895 battery was demolished to create additional space for the growing station , and a narrow @-@ gauge railway constructed along the spit . Parts of the castle moat were concreted over to provide parking for planes . Calshot twice hosted the Schneider Trophy air races over the Solent , the last two in the sequence of popular international events designed to encourage the development of new , high @-@ speed technology . The Empire Air Day events were also held at Calshot , attracting 1 @, @ 000 visitors in 1935 .

During the Second World War , Calshot Castle was initially defended by troops from the Hampshire Regiment , and a barge equipped with two 3 @-@ inch (76 mm) anti @-@ aircraft guns and a 40 @-@ millimetre (1 @. @ 6 in) Bofors gun . Air @-@ raid shelters were constructed in the castle 's moat , with five boats from the base taking part in the Dunkirk evacuation . The threat of German invasion increased , however , and the defences were expanded in 1940 , with two 12 @-@ pounder quick firing guns placed on the keep 's roof , supported by searchlights . Two additional subordinate batteries , Bungalow and Stonepoint , were built the following year on the other side of Southampton Water and further south @-@ west along the coast . The castle was not damaged during the war and by 1943 was placed on a " care and maintenance " basis , acting as a way station for passing aircraft .

= = = 1945 ? 21st century = = =

After the war , Calshot returned to duty as an active air base , housing two squadrons of Sunderland flying boats which took part in the Berlin airlift of 1948 , before being passed across to Maintenance Command in 1953 . The Southampton Harbour Board built a coastguard lookout tower at the castle in 1952 , and the following year they began to construct a signal station tower on top of the keep , complete with radar and radio facilities , which opened in 1958 . By then , military seaplanes had become obsolete , and the RAF station was finally closed in 1961 .

Hampshire County Council leased the site from the Crown Estates in 1964 ; the castle itself passed into the guardianship of the state , and the hangars were used as an activity centre . A Royal National Lifeboat Institution station opened in 1971 alongside the castle , with a 130 @-@ foot (40 m) -tall replacement coastguard tower constructed two years later .

English Heritage took over management of the castle in 1983 , and stripped back 20th @-@ century additions to present it as it might have appeared in 1914 , including demolishing the old

signal station tower . The site remains open to visitors and received 5 @, @ 751 visitors in 2010 . The castle is protected under UK law as a grade 2 * listed building and as a scheduled monument . The air station 's former hangars are still used as a recreation centre by Hampshire County Council .

= = Architecture = =

Calshot Castle is a three @-@ storey , circular fortification , comprising a keep , gatehouse and curtain wall , predominantly constructed of ashlar Portland stone . When first built in the 16th century , it was designed to carry three tiers of artillery : two positioned on the second floor and the roof of the central keep , and the third in the outer curtain wall . Additional guns could have been placed on the roof of the gatehouse and on the first floor of the keep . Historic England considers it to form a " well preserved example " of the Device Forts .

The castle is surrounded by a water @-@ filled , 16 @-@ sided moat , 8 @.@ 8 metres (29 ft) across , accessed over a 20th @-@ century bridge into the gatehouse , an 18th @-@ century design based on a simpler 16th @-@ century original . The gatehouse was altered in 1896 , with the addition of brick @-@ built ancillary buildings to the southern end . It was probably intended to provide additional living space for the garrison . The gatehouse leads into what was originally a 16 @-@ sided courtyard with 15 gun embrasures round the curtain wall . The wall was lowered to its current height in the 1770s and a concrete building to house searchlights , dating from 1896 , now stretches along the southern end of the castle .

In the centre of the castle is the keep , which has an external diameter of 16 metres (52 ft) , an octagonal lower storey and circular walls on the upper levels . Originally this held accommodation for the captain and the garrison , but it was heavily redeveloped in the 19th and 20th centuries . Its exterior walls have eight recesses at ground level , originally used to store ammunition for the castle 's guns . The basement of the keep was redesigned in the 1890s , when electrical generators were installed , protected by a new , thicker , concrete ceiling . It may originally have been vaulted in stone in a similar style to nearby Hurst Castle .

The first floor of the keep has been restored to its early 20th @-@ century appearance as a barracks room . The second floor was redeveloped in the late 19th century to form another barracks room , with its ceiling incorporating additional early 20th @-@ century girders and concrete to support the gun battery above it . The roof of the keep has two 12 @-@ pounder gun mounts with their original gun @-@ lockers ; there is a 12 @-@ pounder gun on display originally used on a Royal Naval vessel . The keep 's roof would originally have been flat , with crenellations for artillery , but both the roof and crenellations were removed in the 1770s .