

# Yarmouth Castle

## A Scheduled Monument in Yarmouth.



### **The castle seen from the Solent.**

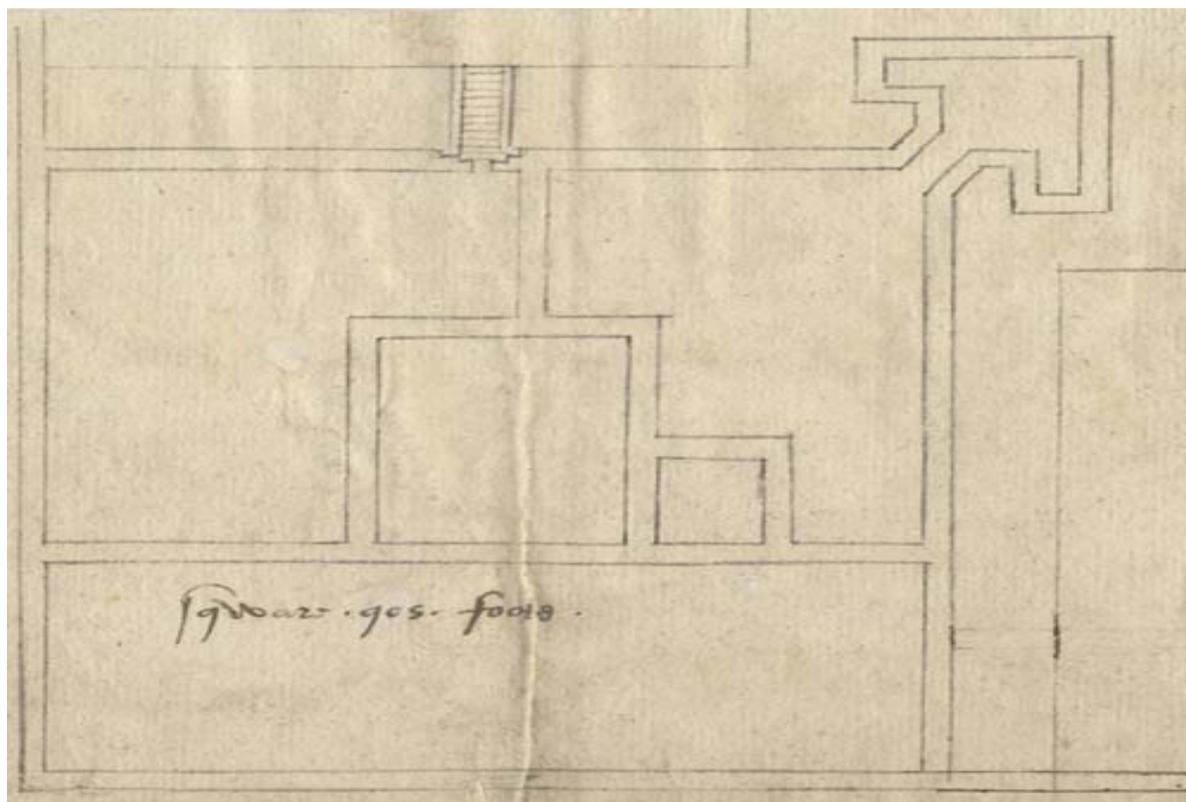
**The castle was part of Henry VIII's defence against the French. The quay battery and the bulwark would have been positioned on the right and left of the castle, respectively. The George hotel to the left is built up to the castle wall.**

### **Details**

The monument includes an artillery castle lying at the mouth of the River Yare where it enters the sea on the north west side of the Isle of Wight. The modern town of Yarmouth lies to the south and east of the castle. The Castle which is a Listed Building Grade I, is stone built and square in plan with a bastion of arrow-head shape at its south east corner. It has two floors above the ground floor. The walls of the castle rise to c.30ft and are washed by the sea on the north and west sides. Within the walls, the castle consists of an embankment topped by a gun platform on the northern, seaward side, behind which are ranges of rooms. Originally the courtyard appears to have been central with a tier of guns set on the upper floor of the surrounding ranges, but from the late 16th century the present arrangement superseded this with the heaviest guns mounted on the platform. The courtyard then took on its present form with a range of buildings along the south wall. These were heightened and enlarged at the end of the 16th century and again in the first half of the 17th century. The original entrance gateway into the courtyard was on the east side. To the west of the courtyard a small barrel-vaulted cellar, which was probably an original powder magazine, has been fitted into the wall. Opposite are two more barrel-vaulted compartments, which, until recently, contained circular powder magazines. These were in existence in 1718 and are part of Holmes' improvements. On the south side of the courtyard is the master gunner's house which was originally of two storeys. This represents a good example of an Elizabethan house plan of medieval derivation: the door led into a truncated hall, communicating with a kitchen and service wing, which was formed in the bastion, and a parlour on the side away from the door. A staircase rises from the hall and leads to the chambers above it. At this first floor level the chambers over the hall and parlour have been made into one. The uppermost floor can now only be approached via the platform. This second floor

has a long room, dating to 1632, on its southern wall, and in front of this the one surviving lodging room of the original two.

The platform, covering the north side of the second floor, was constructed between 1559 and 1565. It was built to carry all the heavier armaments of the castle.



**1559 plan of the castle, showing the original courtyard design, the "arrow-head" bastion and the surrounding moat.**

The present parapet with rounded internal angles of the wall was formed in 1813 and at the same time the iron rails on which the gun carriages were traversed were established. On the north side of the castle, two blocked gun ports of the first-floor tier may be seen. One is partly blocked by a pair of pointed buttresses which were added in 1609. Towards the west side are two surviving arched gun ports of the same tier as the blocked ones. The south and east walls were flanked by a moat 9m wide, terminated by continuations of the north and west walls. The moat can no longer be seen at ground level but survives as a buried feature. There was formerly an earthen bulwark of Elizabethan date outside the moat and, more recently, an auxiliary battery on the quay to the west. The Castle was part of Henry VIII's defence against the French; indeed, the Isle of Wight had been attacked by them in 1545.

The Castle was erected by 1547, when one thousand pounds was paid to George Mills for building works and for the discharge of the soldiers guarding the operations. At that time it contained three cannon and culverines and 12 smaller guns. Henry's innovation of artillery castle building along the east and south coasts of England had begun in 1538 on news of the 'rapprochement' between the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France. These earlier castles all had low round bastions to carry the guns. However, by 1545, this type of design was being superseded by pointed or 'arrowhead' bastions, which allowed complete coverage of the walls by lateral fire with minimum exposure. Yarmouth Castle has one 'arrow-head' bastion, which has been identified as the earliest surviving in England. In 1558 Richard Worsley, a previous Captain of the Island under Henry but dismissed by Queen Mary in 1553, was recalled by Elizabeth, and he immediately surveyed, repaired and improved all the castles in the island.

To him is credited the creation of the platform on the seaward side and the abandonment of the central courtyard. The existing house was also begun at this time. In the later Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, the castle

underwent frequent modification. In 1587 when the Spanish Armada was imminent, some 50 pounds worth of repairs was done, and in 1597-1598, when Spain had lost much of the initiative of the war, a more elaborate addition was made. Besides further repairs and a new building on the platform, an earthen bulwark, with bastions and revelins for further guns, was constructed outside the moat. In 1599, 1603 and 1609 there were further repairs, the last included the addition of the two corner buttresses. Soon after 1632 more work was carried out on the fort including raising the parapet and the creation of the long room as a store serving the platform.

During the Civil War, the castle commanders were royalist, but the castle was surrendered to the Parliamentarians without fighting. The fort's garrison increased in size until with the Restoration came general disbanding of the army, and in 1661 the garrison was dismissed. Eventually in 1669 Sir Robert Holmes was appointed Captain of the Island, and he reorganised the defences. It was during this time that the moat was filled in and a house, now the George Hotel, built partly over it. The castle remained undisturbed throughout the 18th century, while in 1813, towards the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the parapet reached its present form with the rails laid down to take the traversing platforms of four naval guns. In 1885 the authorities decided to withdraw the garrison and dismantle the guns. The Yarmouth Harbour Commissioner's Office and buildings belonging to the George Hotel which lie on the south side of the castle and straddle the moat are excluded from the scheduling, but the ground beneath is included. All road and pedestrian surfaces, and all modern fixtures and fittings are excluded from the scheduling, although the ground beneath them and the fabric to which they are attached are included.

**Source: *Historic England***

### **Reasons for Scheduling**

Artillery castles were constructed as strong stone defensive structures specifically to house heavy guns. Most date from the period of Henry VIII's maritime defence programme between 1539 and 1545, though the earliest and latest examples date from 1481 and 1561 respectively. They were usually sited to protect a harbour entrance, anchorage or similar feature. These monuments represent some of the earliest structures built exclusively for the new use of artillery in warfare and can be attributed to a relatively short time span in English history. Their architecture is specific in terms of date and function and represents an important aspect of the development of defensive structures generally. Although documentary sources suggest that 36 examples originally existed, all on the east, south and south east coasts of England, only 21 survive. All examples are considered to be of national importance. Yarmouth Castle is an imposing and well-preserved example of an artillery castle. Much of the castle stands in its early 17th century form and is in an excellent state of preservation. It displays the earliest use of an 'arrow-head' bastion in England and as such is unique in the development of defensive buildings in this country.

**Source: *Historic England***

### **Sources**

#### **Books and journals**

Rigold, S E, Yarmouth Castle, (1985), 14-18

Rigold, S E, Yarmouth Castle, (1985), 3-13

**Source: *Historic England***

By S. E. Rigold - Original diagram, "Yarmouth Castle", Ministry of Works, 1958, pp.7-8, Public Domain.



Diagram of the castle: **A** – magazine; **B** – modern entrance; **C** – parlour and hall. **D** – courtyard; **E** – original entrance; **F** – kitchen; **G** – Master Gunner's House. **H** – Long Room; **I** – platform; **J** – attic; **K** – bastion attic.

### Coordinates

**Latitude:** 50.7066 / 50°42'23"N = **Longitude:** -1.5 / 1°30'0"W

**OS Eastings:** 435399.277408 = **OS Northings:** 89776.226292 = **OS Grid:** SZ353897

**Mapcode National:** GBR 78Q.RJN = **Mapcode Global:** FRA 77R6.MG0

**Entry Name:** Yarmouth Castle

**Scheduled Date:** 9 October 1981

**Last Amended:** 13 December 1994

**Source:** Historic England

**Source ID:** 1009391

**English Heritage Legacy ID:** 22016

**County:** Isle of Wight

**Civil Parish:** Yarmouth

**Built-Up Area:** Yarmouth

**Traditional County:** Hampshire

**Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County):** Isle of Wight

**Church of England Parish:** Yarmouth St James

**Church of England Diocese:** Portsmouth