

## WEST FORT HOUT BAY

(Source <http://www.houtbayheritage.org.za/page85.html>)



West Fort commands the Southwestern approaches to the Bay. First established in 1781 it is located at "York Point" named after the Duke of York, Frederick Augustus, the second son of Britain's King George III. He was also Colonel in Chief of the Army.

The site is owned by the state. West Fort's location is stunning but it has not seen significant maintenance from the Municipal or Provincial Heritage Authorities for many years. 200 years of exposure to salt air and gale force winds have severely damaged the 24 pounder guns to the point where it is questionable or whether or not they could ever be fully restored.

During WWII, anti aircraft guns were temporarily located on the site and 'ready magazine' concrete bunkers were constructed on top of what was once a number of embrasures and traversing platforms. However, little is known about what is below ground and extensive archaeological excavation is needed to establish the actual configuration of the site. The previous timber carriages were probably constructed from old railway sleepers in c.1947 and replaced the old make-shift mountings shown in the picture below. It is interesting to see how little development had taken place in the Hangberg area at that stage. However in 1947 electricity came to Hout Bay and Hout Bay's growing fishing industry was boosted by the largest cold store in the Southern Hemisphere. The once 'exposed site' was

hemmed in by fish processing plants and the Harbour. Thirty or more years ago the heritage site was surrounded by broken rusty wire fences and was all but abandoned, the seedy precincts not being conducive to attracting many visitors. Eventually, entrepreneur Alfred Broderick, gradually built up the now flourishing "Fish on the Rocks" open air restaurant and at the same time improved both the ambience and security of the area. Today, York Point has many more visitors whilst over the last few years the popularity of the adjacent Harbour area seems to have diminished, probably due to poor management and increasing crime.

For most people the Fort remains an enigma and it will probably remain so until our heritage and tourism authorities recognise its value as

