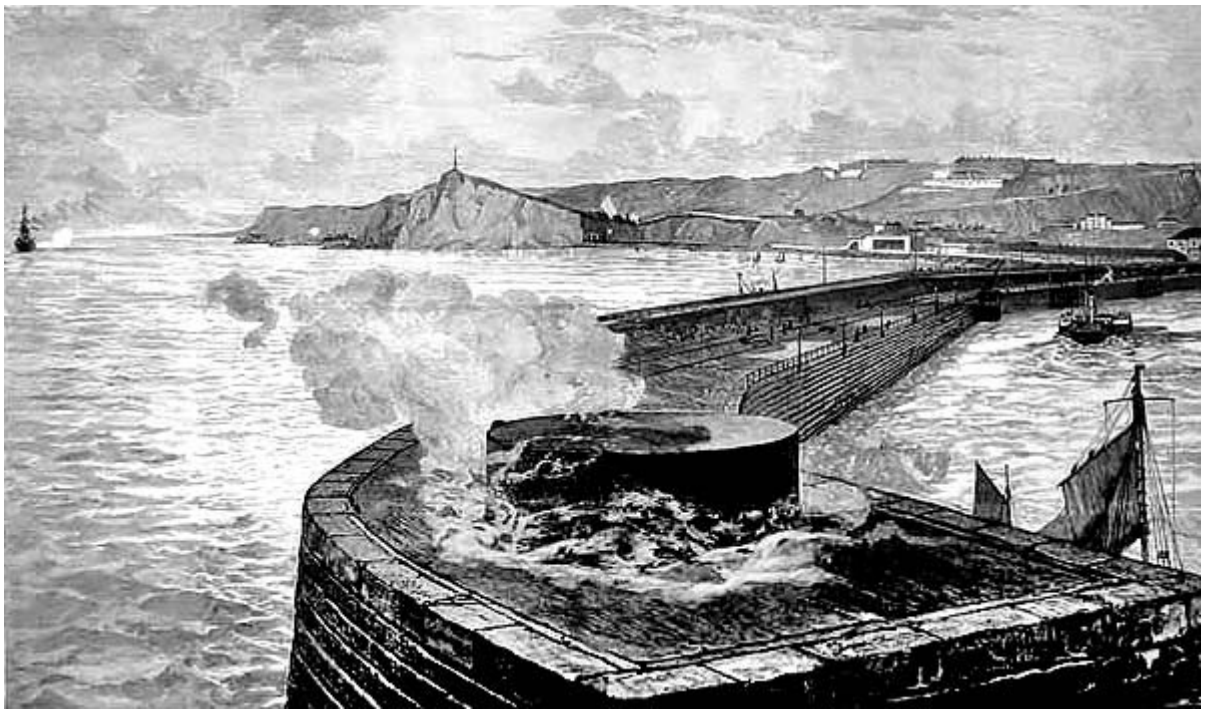
Dover Turret 1886 presentation

There's a major gun emplacement in the western harbour wall at Dover. It's a revolving heavily armoured turret housing two massive, 16-inch muzzle-loading rifled guns, each weighing 80 tons. The turret and its guns are still there. I believe you might be able to go up to the turret, but its insides and the guns are not open to the public.



This illustration appeared in the *Illustrated London News* in March 1886, showing the Dover turret during early firing trials. It's one of the few images that captures the turret in action.

Work on the turret began in 1882 and the turret and guns were declared ready in 1886. It was declared obsolete in 1902.

According to Wikipedia, a turret mounting the largest guns at the time - 12-inch – was proposed as part of the Admiralty Pier Fort construction of which was begun in 1872. However, the Committee in charge favoured having the most powerful guns. The 12-inch guns were 25 tons; the new proposal was to use the 80-ton guns. These guns took 18 months to build and the first was ready in 1875. These 80-ton guns were based on those mounted on the 1881 battleship HMS *Inflexible*. I don't know the capabilities of the Dover guns, but if they were the same as the *Inflexible*'s, they had a maximum range of 8,000 yards and could penetrate 23 inches (580 mm) of wrought iron armour at 1,000 yards (910 m). The muzzle loading process took between 2.5 and four minutes.

The turret for these monster guns was a circular affair, protected with three layers of 7-inch armour, with wood and iron in between the layers. The weight of the turret, including the guns, was 895 tons. Movement of the turret and ammunition etc was provided by various steam engines.

The two guns were in place by mid-1882 and test firings began the next year. These built up until a full-charge firing with 450 pounds of powder was undertaken. These did not bring down the cliffs as was predicted, though some windowpanes of a nearby lighthouse were broken. In 1886, the committee witnessed the firing of four rounds and declared that the turret was ready to be handed over to the Royal Artillery.

There is a fine animated video on Youtube: Dover Gun Turret 1886 showing how the turret operated.