

Victorian Forts and Batteries

Datasheets on the Victorian Fortifications of the United Kingdom

Portsmouth



David Moore

<http://www.victorianforts.co.uk>

Fort Nelson

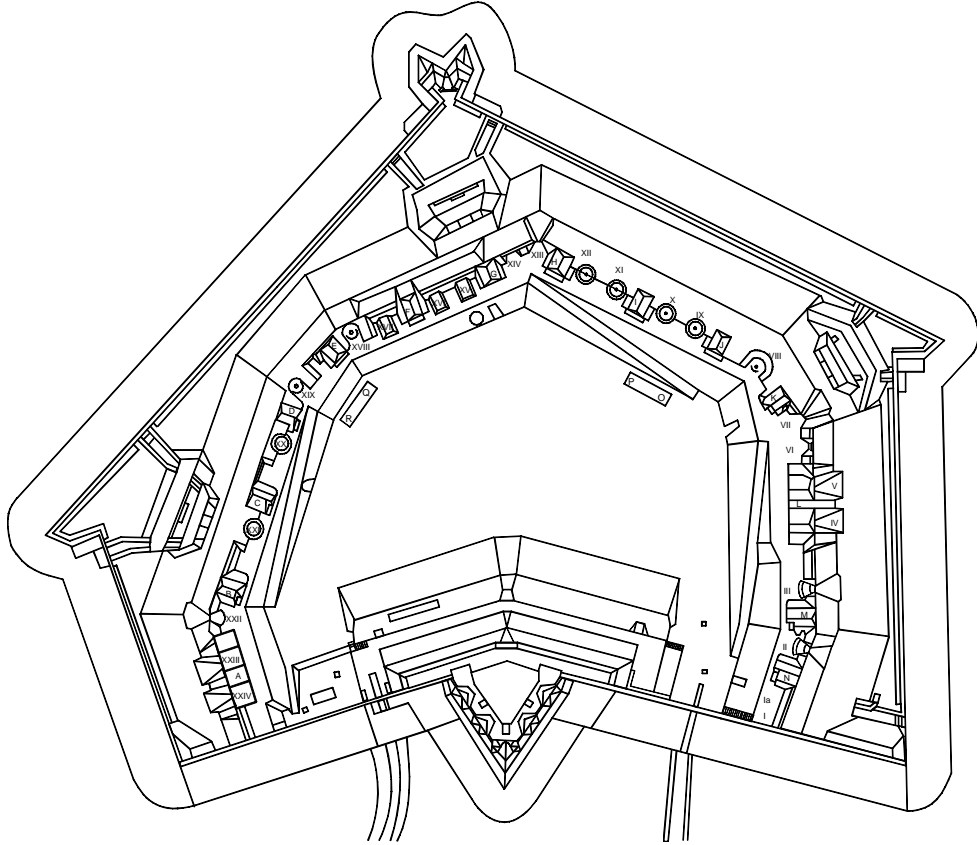
Commenced	1861	Armament	
Completed	1870	1876	Approved 34 x 7-inch RBL; 2 x 64 pr. RML; 6 x rifled Howitzers; 16 x SB flank guns
Cost	£ 78,649	1893	Mounted 10 x 7-inch RBL; 6 x 64 pr. RML; 4 x 40 pr. RBL.
Map Reference	SU 607072		Required to complete 2 x 40 pr. RBL; 8 x 32 pr. SBBL.
Position	Portsdown Hill Northern Approaches	1898	to be added 10 x MG
Type	Land Front / Polygonal		Disarmed 1907
Ditch	Dry	Caponiers	1 full 2 demi
Guns	30	Counterscarp galleries	None
Barrack Accom.	172	Haxo casemates	4 (2 x double)
Present use	Royal Armouries Museum of Artillery / Hampshire C. C. Army barracks and training /Ammunition depot World War 2	Moncrieff Pits	3
History	Bought by H.C.C. 1978		
Disposal Condition	Actively conserved and restored		
Access	All year		
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell		

History and Description

Fort Nelson is 2000 yards east of Fort Wallington and is a six sided fort, built of brick, chalk and earth, protected by a deep dry ditch, revetted on the scarp but unrevetted on the counterscarp. This ditch is protected by a full fish tail shaped caponier in the salient of the main north rampart and two smaller demi caponiers at the shoulders. The main rampart has positions for 64 pr RMLs, 7-inch RBLs and 6.6-inch howitzers. Each flank also has a Haxo casemate for two 7-inch RBLs (the only one of the Portsdown forts to have this feature). The intermediate range defence of the fort is from three mortar batteries, one to the rear of each caponier, hidden within the rampart. Each contained three 13-inch mortars. The lower fighting levels consist of three separate tunnels running from the barrack block area through the chalk of the hill to the caponiers. The centre tunnel to the full caponier also passes through the main magazine forty feet beneath the parade ground. The centre of the gorge is closed with a barrack block and redan containing officers quarters. Access to the fort from the military road is on two levels each fitted with a Guthrie rolling bridge. Nelson was disarmed in 1907. It was occupied from 1905 to 1914 by 35 (Heavy) Battery Royal Garrison Artillery. From 1938 the fort was extensively altered to house an area magazine. Ten huge Anti-Aircraft shell storage magazines were constructed on the parade.

Hampshire County Council have completely restored the fort, with the exception of the two demi-caponiers and one mortar battery, and it is currently leased by the Royal Armouries as its Museum of Artillery. It is the home of the Palmerston Forts Society and the Society's uniformed section performs authentic gun drills on the fort's complement of Victorian armament.

Fort Nelson



Fort Wallington

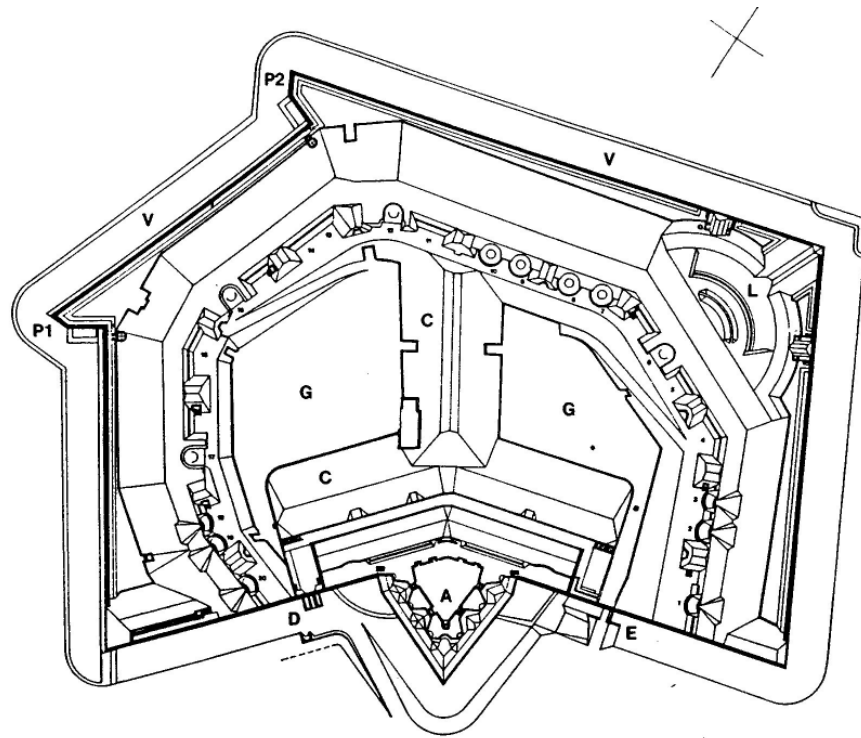
Commenced	1861	Armament	
Completed	1874	1876	Approved 28 x 7-inch RBL; 8 x 64 pr. RML; 6 x rifled Howitzers; 16 x SB flank guns
Cost	£ 100,569	1893	Mounted 10 x 7-inch RBL; 4 x 64 pr. RML; 2 x 40 pr. RBL; 3 x 8-inch RML Howitzers; 1 x 6.3-in Howitzers.
Map Reference	SU 589069		Required to complete 6 x 40 pr. RBL ; 10 x 32 pr. SBBL; 2 x 6.3-inch How.
Position	Portsmouth Hill / Northern Approaches	1898	to be added 10 x MG Disarmed 1907
Type	Land Front / Polygonal	Caponiers	2 demi
Ditch	Dry	Counterscarp galleries	1
Guns	17	Haxo casemates	none
Barrack Accom.	172	Moncrieff Pits	4
Present use	Private industrial estate / 80% demolished		
History	Army barracks and training camp		
Disposal	Sold, demolished 1961 - 1962		
Condition	Part redan & gorge wall remain		
Access	Can be viewed from the outside		
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell		

History and Description

Fort Wallington was constructed at the extreme western end of Portsdown Hill on a small hill overlooking Wallington village. Because of its vulnerable position as the hinge between the hill forts and the Gosport western defensive line Wallington had to be designed to repel an attack from all sides. It was to have had a scarp gallery along its entire enceinte but this failed due to the nature of the ground. It was a six sided work and was the smallest of the hill forts. Protected by two double storey caponiers and one counterscarp gallery the ditch was revetted in concrete where the scarp galleries had failed. A single mortar battery for six 13-inch mortars was sited at the North East shoulder. The caponiers and mortar battery were serviced by tunnels through the chalk from the rear barrack block and redan sited in the centre of the gorge. Wallington was the only one of the Portsdown forts to have its magazine separate from the tunnel complex. In this case it was sited to the left of the upper entrance to the fort, under the rampart, halfway along a tunnel that was originally to serve the scarp gallery. Like the other Portsdown Hill forts the entrances were on two levels, each crossing over the gorge ditch by a Guthrie rolling bridge. The fort was upgraded in the 1890s with four Moncrieff pits and the usual 64 pr. RML and 7-inch RBL positions.

During World War Two Wallington served as an annexe to the nearby Victualling Depot. The fort was sold by the Crown in April 1961 to Mr. J. Sullivan for £12,500. He demolished most of the fort, retaining the outer wall of the redan and the guard room, coal store and cells section only. This is all that now remains of the fort, the parade and site being occupied by an industrial estate.

Fort Wallington



Fort Southwick

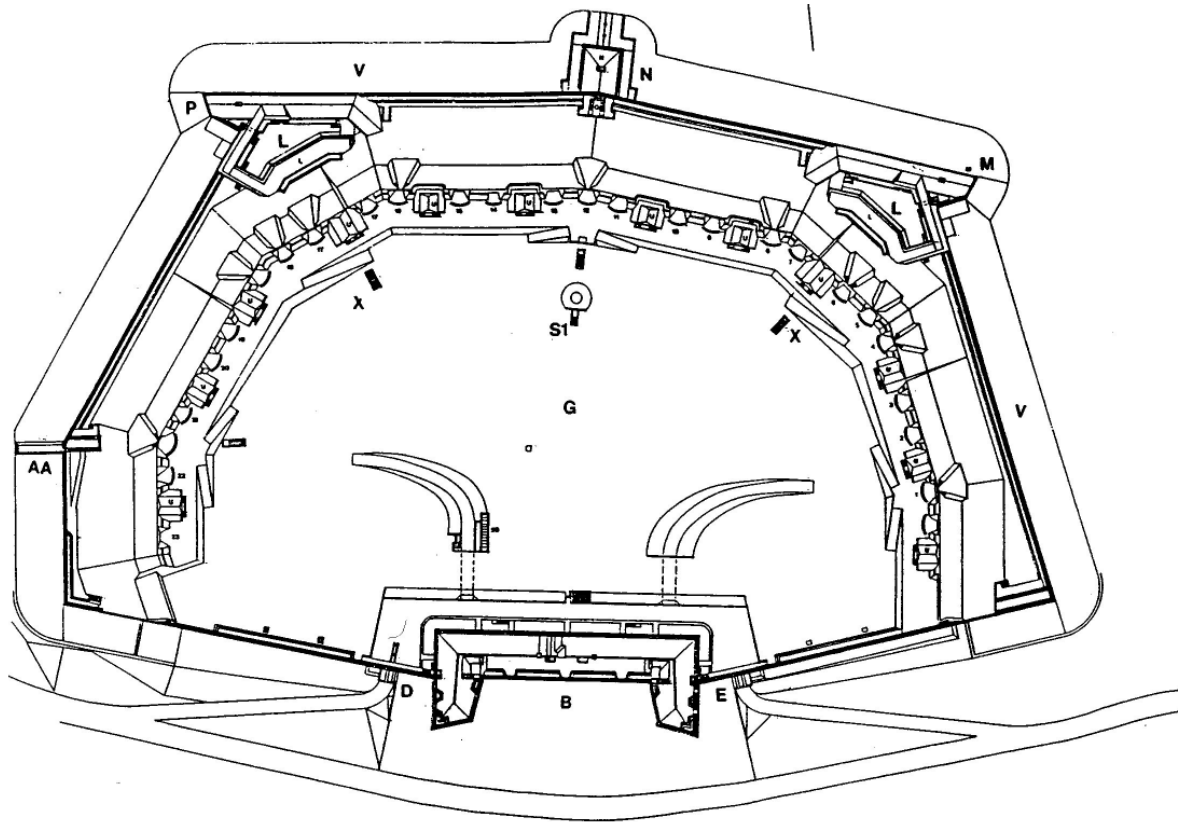
Commenced	1861	Armament	
Completed	1870	1876 Approved	
Cost	£ 94262	35 x 7-inch RBL	
Map Reference	SU 628069	10 x rifled Howitzers	
Position	Portsdown Hill / Northern	20 x SB flank guns	
	Approaches Land Front /	1893 Mounted	
Type	Polygonal	8 x 7-inch RBL	
Ditch	Dry	9 x 64 pr. RML	
Guns	78	6 x 8-in Howitzers	
Barrack Accom.	226	Required to complete	
Present use	Recently released by M.O.D. Navy	6 x 64pr RML	
History	Army then Navy Barracks	8 x 32 pr. SBBL (fixed amm conv.)	
		Caponiers	1 full 2 demi
Disposal	Soon, when developer is found	Counterscarp galleries	(1 ditch gallery)
Condition	Altered for modern usage. Good		
Access	No public access. Rear can be viewed from road	Haxo casemates	none
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell	Moncrieff Pits	2

History and Description

Fort Southwick is 2,400 yards east of Fort Nelson. It is one of two central forts designed to house a larger complement of men in an inverted U shaped barrack block in the centre of the gorge. It is similar in trace to Fort Widley, apart from one minor deviation to the ditch and rampart at the southwest corner. Its ditch is revetted on the scarp and counterscarp in brick and flint. It has one full caponier at its main north salient with two smaller demi caponiers at the shoulders. A small musketry gallery crosses the ditch at the south west angle to cover a minor branch of the ditch. Behind the demi caponiers and set into the rampart are mortar batteries for five mortars each. The rampart has positions for the usual armament of 64 pr RMLs, 7-inch RBLs and 6.6 inch howitzers. A central spiral stair from the parade allows communication with the four main tunnels running of it radially. These lead to the barrack block and caponiers with stairs to the mortar batteries and chemin de ronde. Off the tunnel from the barrack to the north caponier is the main magazine. Southwick occupies the high point of the hill and held the water storage tanks for the other forts, feeding them through a brick lined aqueduct. This, despite rumours to the contrary, was the only connection between the forts.

During World War Two Southwick served as a H.Q. for Allied Commanders. (1943 for Canadian and U.S. Forces). From 1938 to 1940 it held a section of the Ordnance Survey. A large complex of underground bunkers and command positions were excavated beneath the Victorian tunnels. Until recently it was occupied by the Navy (as HQ and offices for C. in C. Home Fleet) and is largely intact, its underground portions are no longer in use.

Fort Southwick



Fort Widley

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 20%;">Commenced</td><td>1861</td></tr> <tr><td>Completed</td><td>1870</td></tr> <tr><td>Cost</td><td>£ 93980</td></tr> <tr><td>Map Reference</td><td>SU 656075</td></tr> <tr><td>Position</td><td>Portsdown Hill / Northern Approaches</td></tr> <tr><td>Type</td><td>Land Front / Polygonal</td></tr> <tr><td>Ditch</td><td>Dry</td></tr> <tr><td>Guns</td><td>78</td></tr> <tr><td>Barrack Accom.</td><td>226</td></tr> <tr><td>Present use</td><td>Centre for Portsdown Park & Activities centre</td></tr> <tr><td>History</td><td>Army barracks R.A. until 1939</td></tr> <tr><td>Disposal</td><td>Portsmouth City 1961 / 1972</td></tr> <tr><td>Condition</td><td>Partly restored</td></tr> <tr><td>Access</td><td>by arrangement . Tours during Summer weekends</td></tr> <tr><td>Sources</td><td>Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell</td></tr> </table>	Commenced	1861	Completed	1870	Cost	£ 93980	Map Reference	SU 656075	Position	Portsdown Hill / Northern Approaches	Type	Land Front / Polygonal	Ditch	Dry	Guns	78	Barrack Accom.	226	Present use	Centre for Portsdown Park & Activities centre	History	Army barracks R.A. until 1939	Disposal	Portsmouth City 1961 / 1972	Condition	Partly restored	Access	by arrangement . Tours during Summer weekends	Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell	<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2">Armament</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">1876 Approved 35 x 7-inch RBL; 1 x 64 pr. RML (on CW); 10 x rifled Howitzers; 16 x SB flank guns</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">1893 Mounted 10 x 7-inch RBL; 4 x 64 pr. RML; 4 x 20 pr. RBL; 2 x 8-inch RML Howitzers. 5 x 6.6-in Howitzers; 8 x 32pr. SBBL. Required to complete 2 x 20pr. RBL; 8 x 32 pr. SBBL (fixed amm conv.)</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2">Disarmed 1907</td></tr> <tr><td>Caponiers</td><td>1 full 2 demi</td></tr> <tr><td>Counterscarp galleries</td><td>none</td></tr> <tr><td>Haxo casemates</td><td>none</td></tr> <tr><td>Moncrieff Pits</td><td>2</td></tr> </table>	Armament		1876 Approved 35 x 7-inch RBL; 1 x 64 pr. RML (on CW); 10 x rifled Howitzers; 16 x SB flank guns		1893 Mounted 10 x 7-inch RBL; 4 x 64 pr. RML; 4 x 20 pr. RBL; 2 x 8-inch RML Howitzers. 5 x 6.6-in Howitzers; 8 x 32pr. SBBL. Required to complete 2 x 20pr. RBL; 8 x 32 pr. SBBL (fixed amm conv.)		Disarmed 1907		Caponiers	1 full 2 demi	Counterscarp galleries	none	Haxo casemates	none	Moncrieff Pits	2
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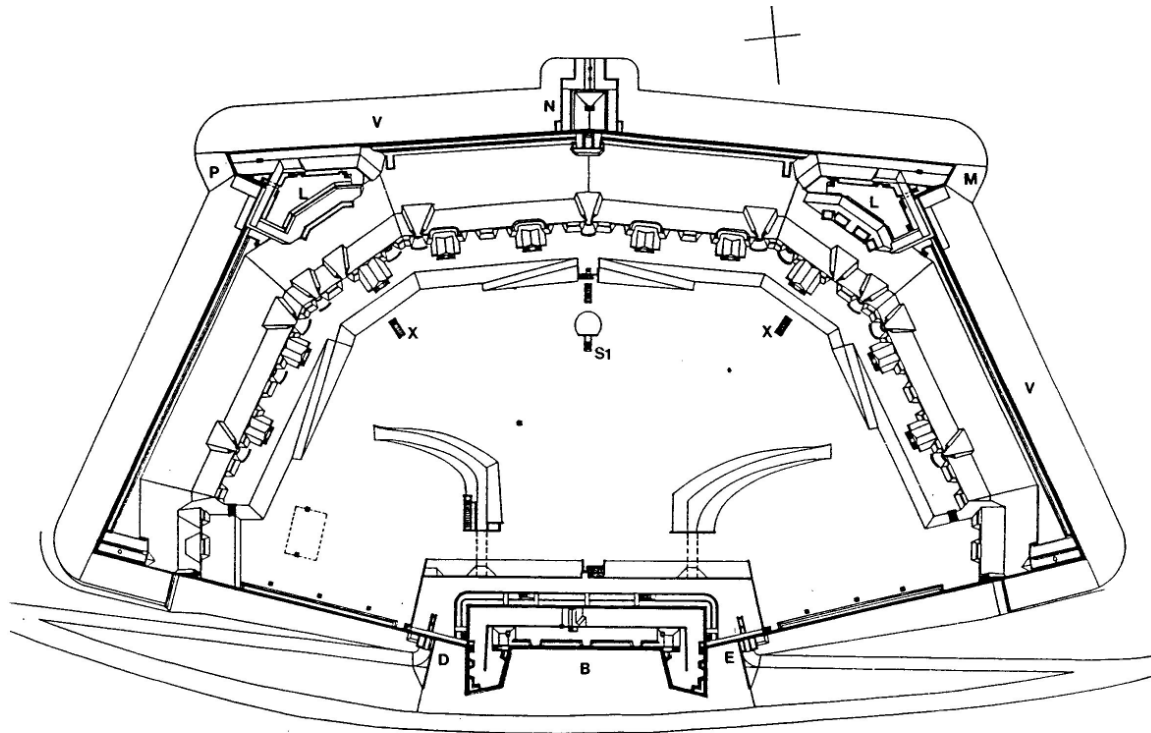
History and Description

Fort Widley is 3,100 yards east of Fort Southwick. It is six sided in trace and is symmetrical about a north south axis. It is identical to Fort Southwick, apart from one small deviation. The east and west ditches are enfiladed by small two storey demi caponiers whilst the main north ditch is covered by a full caponier. The return angles of the gorge ditch and protected by small musketry galleries. The tunnel system and magazine arrangements are the same as those for Fort Southwick, as are the ramparts.

Widley saw a variety of uses during the Second World War. From 1940 it served as an 'Action Post, Fire'. From 1941 it had a R.E. Bomb Disposal Unit. From 1942 it was used briefly to house POWs. From 1943 it was used as an alternative control centre for Southwick House.

The fort is now maintained by Portsmouth City Council and is opened for public tours at weekends during the Summer months. The area surrounding it is designated as a conservation and study area.

Fort Widley



Fort Purbrook

Commenced	1862	Armament	
Completed	1870	1876	Approved 42 x 7-inch RBL; 1 x 64 pr. RML; 12 x SB flank guns
Cost	£ 135000	1893	Mounted 7 x 7-inch RBL; 1 x 4-inch BL; 7 x 64 pr. RML; 4 x 40 pr. RBL; 4 x 8-inch RML Howitzers; 5 x 32pr. SBBL.
Map Reference	SU 678065		Required to complete 2 x 40pr. RBL; 6 x 32 pr. SBBL (fixed amm conv.)
Position	Portsdown Hill / Northern Approaches	1898	to be added 1 x MG
Type	Land Front / Polygonal		Disarmed 1907
Ditch	Dry	Caponiers	1 full 1 demi
Guns	78	Counterscarp galleries	(2 ditch galleries)
Barrack Accom.	227	Haxo casemates	none
Present use	Portsmouth Youth Activities Centre	Moncrieff Pits	3
History	Army barracks / Naval Radar training to 1968		
Disposal Condition	Sold to Portsmouth City 1969		
Access	Partly restored		
	Open Summer weekends to public		
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell		

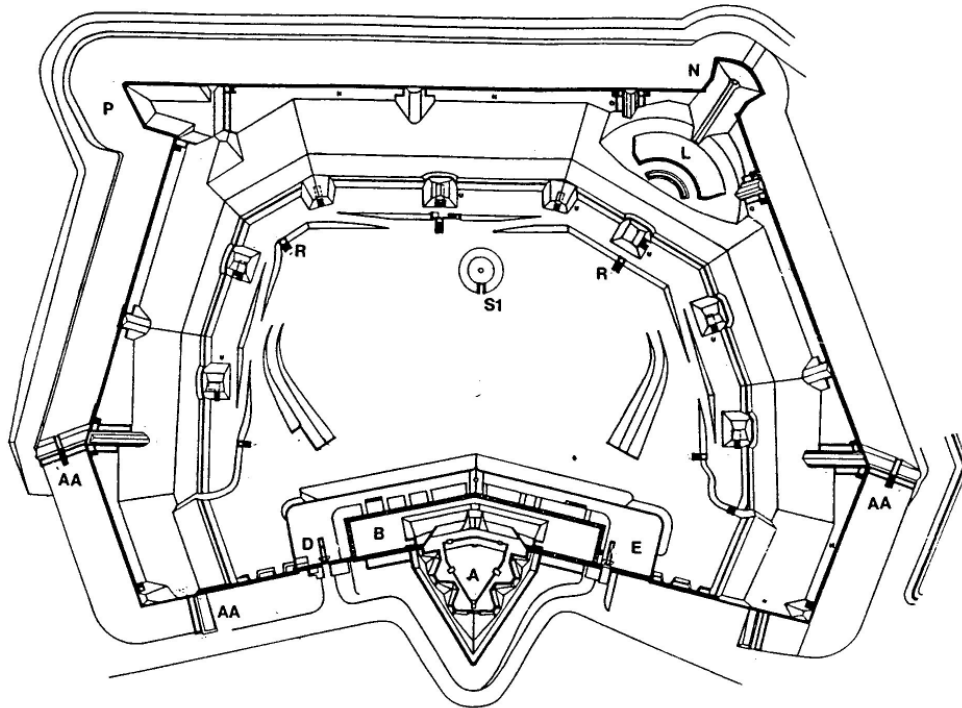
History and Description

Purbrook occupies the east end of the defensive line on Portsdown Hill. It is 2,400 yards east of Fort Widley and it built on a seven sided trace. Because of its position on the flank of the hill it was constructed to bring more firepower to bear on the north-eastern approaches and its north-east salient is protected by a full caponier with a large five-bay mortar battery behind. The western ditch is protected by a demi caponier whilst the minor branches of the ditch are covered by musketry galleries crossing the ditch. A central spiral stair leads from the parade to the underground service tunnels from the caponiers and barrack. The main magazine is off a side tunnel from the central spiral stair. The passages are the only ones in the Portsmouth defences to be equipped with chicanes. The vulnerability of the fort to its northeast and east led to the construction of two outposts to the fort, Crookhorn and Farlington redoubts. Access to both redoubts was originally to have been through tunnels from Purbrook. Also a covered way led to Crookhorn Redoubt. The barrack block and redan at Purbrook are almost identical to those at Fort Nelson. The caponiers seem to have been used for experiments in the use of iron to cover gun ports and the fort is cited in a lecture to the Royal United Services Institute by Jervois on 'The Application of Iron to Fortification'.

During World War Two the fort seems to have been derelict until the 65th. Chemical Warfare Company moved in in June 1940.

Purbrook is now owned by Portsmouth City Council and is used for youth activities. It is largely intact and in a good state of conservation.

Fort Purbrook



Crookhorn Redoubt

Commenced	1862	Armament	
Completed	Demolished 1876		
Cost	£ ?	None	
Map Reference	SU 682067		
Position	Portsdown Hill, Northern Approaches		
Type	Land Front, Polygonal.		
Ditch	Dry		
Guns	22		
Barrack Accom.	0		
Present use	Site remains		
History	Outpost to Purbrook / Never completed	Caponiers	2
Disposal Condition	Demolished by 1876	Counterscarp galleries	1
Access	Site on Private land / Golf Course	Haxo casemates	none
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell. Precis of correspondence 1893	Moncrieff Pits	none

History and Description

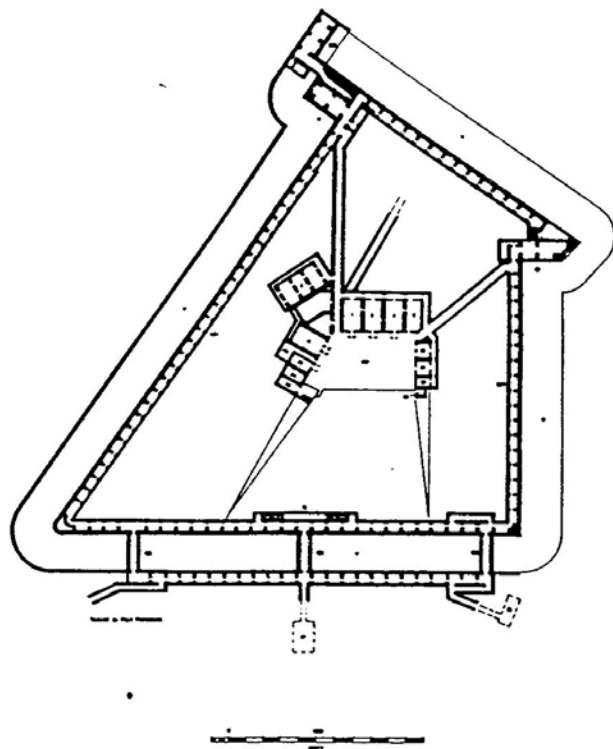
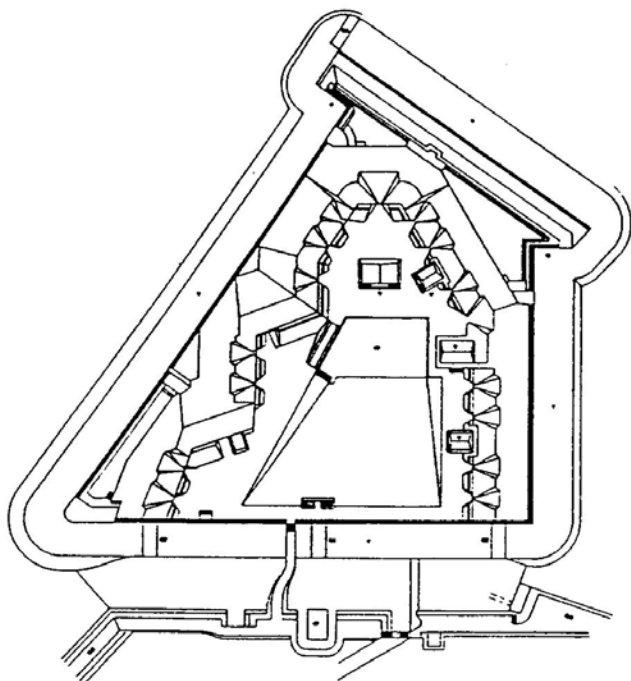
Crookhorn Redoubt was designed as an advanced work to Fort Purbrook to cover an area of 'dead' ground to the northeast of Fort Purbrook, commanding the approach by the northeast slopes of Portsdown Hill which could not otherwise be swept by the main guns inside fort Purbrook. The front face of Crookhorn was to have been at an acute angle. It was to have had two caponiers, counterscarp and scarp galleries and its own magazine and barracks. It was originally to mount 16 guns on its terreplein and six guns in the caponiers at the angles of its ditches.

In 1862 the excavation of the site was begun. The site chosen for the redoubt was found to be based on blue slipper clay and in order to reduce costs the northern half was abandoned. Only a portion of the work, consisting of prepared earthworks was constructed.

The armament returns of 1876 list the work as 'demolished'.

No trace of the work survives except a small portion of the covered way that connected Fort Purbrook with both Crookhorn and Farlington Redoubts.

Crookhorn Redoubt



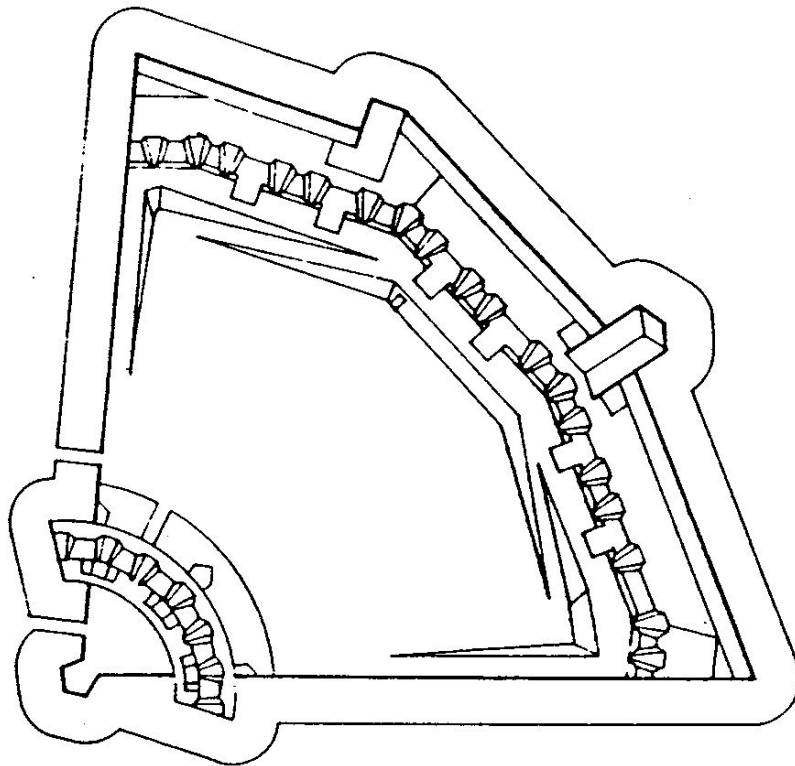
Langstone Redoubt

<p>Commenced Never</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Cost £</p> <p>Map Reference SU 688049</p> <p>Position Farlington Marshes / Eastern approaches</p> <p>Type Land Front / Four sided trace</p> <p>Ditch Wet</p> <p>Guns 18</p> <p>Barrack Accom.</p> <p>Present use A27 runs over site</p> <p>History Never Built</p> <p>Disposal</p> <p>Condition</p> <p>Access</p> <p>Sources Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell</p>	<p>Armament</p> <p>None</p> <p>Caponiers 1 full 1 demi</p> <p>Counterscarp galleries none</p> <p>Haxo casemates none</p> <p>Moncrieff Pits none</p>
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History and Description

This battery was proposed but not built. It was to have been sited on the Farlington Marshes facing east to cover the eastern approaches to Portsmouth and so prevent the whole of the Portsdown Hill lines from being outflanked. The fort was to have had a four sided trace with eighteen guns on the ramparts and a defensible barrack block in the south west angle. The whole would have had a wet ditch. The land was purchased but the fort abandoned due to the costs of the other works. The 1868 Committee were told that an earthwork would be built instead at time of expected attack.

Langstone Redoubt



Farlington Redoubt

Commenced	1862	Armament	
Completed		1876	Proposed 14 x 64pr RML on travelling carriages kept at Purbrook.
Cost	£	1884	6 x 64pr. 71 cwt on parapet carriages, 2 x 64pr 58cwt on Moncrieff carriages, 1 x 4-inch B.L.
Map Reference	SU 687065 Portsdown Hill /	1886	Proposed 5 x 64pr R.M.L. 3 x 7-inch R.B.L.
Position	Northern approaches	1893	Mounted 7 x 64 pr. RML Required to complete 1 x 4-inch BL
Type	Land Front / Polygonal	1898	Mounted 1 x 4-inch BL 7 x 64 pr. RML
Ditch	Dry	1907	Disarmed
Guns	18	Caponiers	1
Barrack Accom.	0	Counterscarp galleries	3
Present use	Site remains	Haxo casemates	none
History	Outpost to Purbrook / Never fully completed	Moncrieff Pits	2
Disposal Condition	Demolished 1970s Gas company storage facility		
Access	Private land		
Sources	Solent Papers No 3 Garry Mitchell		

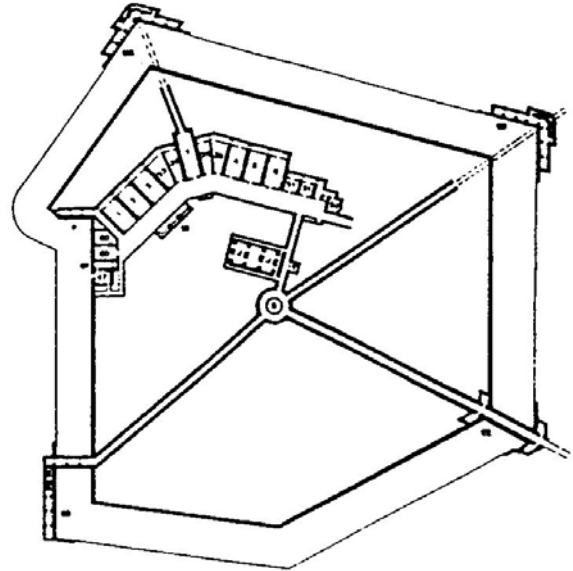
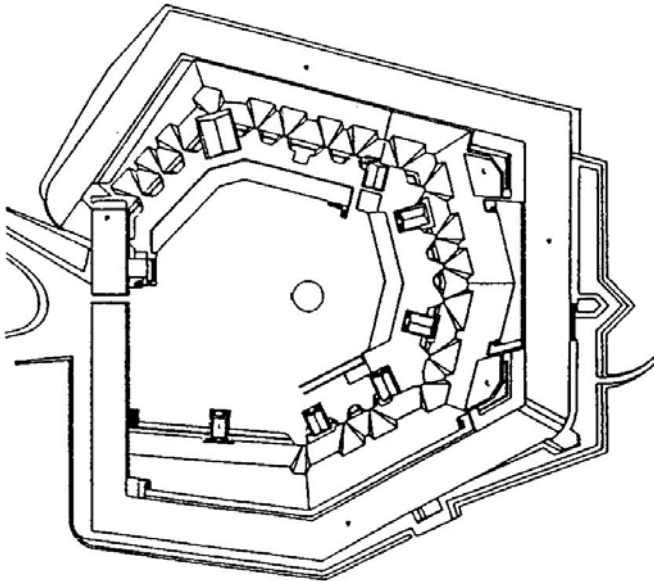
History and Description

Farlington Redoubt was to be an outwork of Fort Purbrook on its eastern side commanding the eastern approach to Portsdown Hill which could not be swept by the guns from Fort Purbrook itself. It was at the extreme eastern end of the Portsdown Line of forts with its front face towards Bedhampton, its right and left faces embracing either brow of the hill and its base resting on Fort Purbrook at its immediate rear. A tunnel was to have been constructed to allow gun crews to move into the redoubt under cover from attacking forces. Farlington Redoubt, like Crookhorn Redoubt, was to have been constructed with its own magazine and barracks. With a proposed armament of eighteen guns it was to have two mortar batteries, each holding three mortars, in the angles of the ditches behind its east caponier. Substantial underground works were envisaged to protect the ditches, which were dry. Countermining was therefore possible. It appears that once more costs prevented the work being constructed as planned. It appears that the barrack casemates were not constructed, instead the work was prepared as a D shaped rampart with traverses and shell recesses, a dry ditch but no counterscarps. The fort was to be manned in time of attack by gun crews from the nearby Fort Purbrook who were to access the work via a connecting tunnel and covered way. A main magazine to hold mixed natures of projectiles was situated on the parade. By 1891 the work was complete with a mounted armament of five 64pr R.M.L. 71 cwt guns on parapet carriages and two 64pr R.M.L. 58cwt guns on Moncrieff disappearing carriages. At the south west salient was a 4inch B.L. gun.

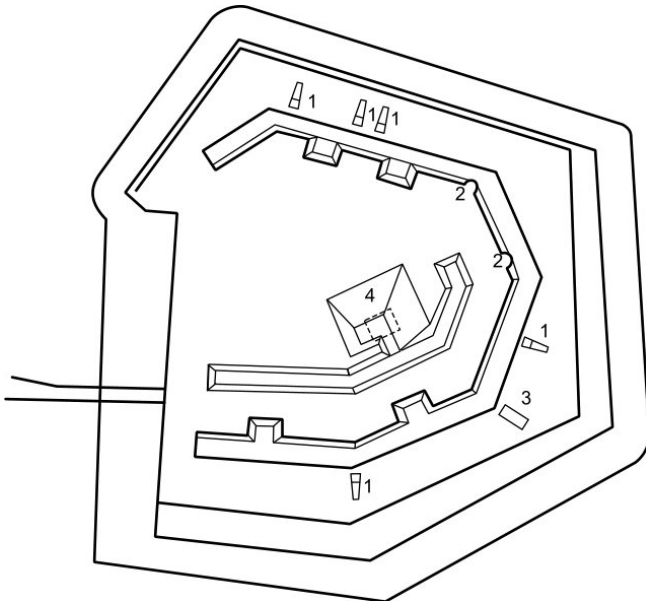
The Redoubt survived until after the Second World War when the site was excavated as a quarry. Finally the last portions of the fort were demolished in the 1970s to make way for an underground storage facility for British Gas. The site is extant and recognisable but nothing remains but the pit in which the fort sat.

There are rumours of the continued existence of the connecting tunnel that was built from Purbrook to Crookhorn and on to Farlington Redoubt, although this has not been confirmed. It is possible that the original access to the tunnel is to be found at the end of the main caponier in Purbrook.

Farlington Redoubt



Above: As proposed



Left: As built (1891)

- 1. 64pr R.M.L. on parapet carriages
- 2. 64pr R.M.L. on Moncrieff carriages
- 3. 4-inch B.L.
- 4. Magazine



Fort Fareham

Commenced	1861	Armament	
Completed	1864	1886	
Cost	£ 104,567	Approved	Mounted Proposed
Map Reference	SU 572049	64 x 7 inch R.B.L.	
Position	Western Approaches / Fareham Gap	5 x 40 pdr. R.B.L.	1 x 7 inch R.B.L.
Type	Land Front / Polygonal	5 x 64 pdr. R.M.L.	2 x 6.3 inch R.M.L. 15 x 7 inch RBL
Ditch	Wet	15 x 32 pdr. S.B.B.L.	3 x Rifled Howitzers.
Guns	41	Armament about 1892. (all probably 7 inch R.B.L.)	
Barrack Accom.	210	10 guns in the emplacements on the south rampart.	
Present use	Parade and casemates used as industrial Estate	5 guns in the Disappearing Gun Pits.	
History	Used mainly as a barracks	Armament 1898	
Disposal	Sold to Fareham Council 1965	10 movable guns.	4 x 4 inch B.L.
Condition	Overgrown, parts derelict & neglected		6 x 40 pdr. R.B.L.
Access	Ramparts and moat free. Rest difficult but possible		15 x 7 inch RBL
Sources	"Fort Fareham, a Brief Story" David Moore	Caponiers	1 full 3 demi
		Counterscarp galleries	None
		Haxo casemates	7 (for 17 guns)
		Moncrieff Pits	5

History and Description

The 1859 Commission on the 'Defences of The United Kingdom' recommended that an outer line of three forts be built between Fareham and Lee Farm two miles in advance of the Fort Elson to Fort Gomer line of works, with an average interval of 1 mile. Of these three forts only Fort Fareham was built. The Defence Committee approved its design in December 1860 and referred it to the Special Committee appointed for the examination of plans of all new works proposed by the Royal Defence Commission. It was often referred to as the 'Fort near Newgate' as it stood a mile below the town of Fareham at Newgate. Another name for it was the Fort at Black House after a nearby farm. It is 3,500 yards in advance of Fort Elson which is the most northerly fort of the Gosport Advanced Lines. Fort Fareham forms the link between this line of Forts and those on Portsdown Hill. It is visible from Fort Wallington which is 2,500 yards to the North and East. Fareham town and creek lie in between the two. Fort Fareham was also to provide protection for the rail (completed 1842) and road links from Gosport to the Portsdown Forts. It secured the ground from which the works on the left of it could be subjected to a reverse fire. Its position made an attack on the Gosport Lines very hazardous without it first being captured or disabled. Work commenced in 1861, the first contract being for the sinking of five wells to a depth of 135 feet. These were finished in July 1861 but no water was found. A fresh contract for sinking them to 200 feet was made and completed in September 1861. The total cost for them was £2,384. In 1863 the Committee approved of closing the gorge of Fort Fareham by a wall, omitting the casemated keep as first designed, due to the provision of sufficient bombproof accommodation under the terreplein of the work. A smaller outlying work to the north of the railway was to be provided as the railway embankment prevented the ground between the fort and the village of Fareham from being seen from the main work. The next contract was for the construction of the fort which was begun in October 1861 and completed in September 1864. Some failures were made good at a small cost and in February 1867 a contract was made for fitting up casemates and laying on water. This was finished in April 1868.

The fort now contains a business park on its parade and most of the casemates have been let out as industrial units. The ramparts are overgrown and the rest of the fort, including the mortar battery and caponiers, is neglected and in danger. Fareham Council put the fort up for sale in 2002 and sold it to London and City Estates, who now manage it..

Fort Fareham

