

The Construction

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 was built on clay soil, 40 feet above Mean Tide Level. The ditch, which is 60 feet broad at bottom, was intended to be wet and provision was made to deepen it by the addition of a cunette. Natural drainage and the water from the wells (which according to the 1869 Royal Commission had water to a depth of 33 feet above M.T.L. or 9 feet above the bottom of the ditch) was to be used and this meant that there was no provision made for an artificial supply. The moats were excavated chiefly through a strata of brick earth or clay, the best possible substance for resisting shot. These beds provided material for the enormous quantity of bricks required. In 1867 the Defence Committee approved of a keep being given to the fort. It never received it.

The Report of the 1869 Commission 'To enquire into the Construction, Condition and Cost of the Fortifications erected, or in the course of erection' stated that:

'The parapets and Glacis having subsided considerably during the consolidation of the earthwork, since their formation, a considerable quantity of material is still required to bring them up to the finished levels. This is to be obtained partly from the deepening of the ditch, and partly from the foot of the Glacis.'

The Report regarded the work to be

'....skilfully constructed as regards stability and permanency and when completed according to the approved plans will be suited to the requirements of modern armaments, and when its ditch was filled with water would afford a fair amount of resistance to any attack to which it may be exposed.'

The estimate for this work in the 1862 schedule was £113,000. In 1863 it was reduced to £90,000 and in 1865 it was merged in the general estimate of £535,000. The total expended up to 30 th. June 1868 amounted to £87,291 with a further £17,276 being required. The total estimated cost was therefore £104,567.

In 1868 the Inspector general of Fortifications (Sir L. Simmons) submitted to the Surveyor General his final report on the state of the defences of the Military Ports, before the closing of the Defence Loan. He stated that one permanent work at least should be constructed in front of Fareham, to cover the present unsatisfactory "Fareham Redoubt", and provisional designs for other works were to be prepared.

A report from Colonel Nugent, Director of Works and Fortifications and secretary of the Defence Committee was attached. He believed that the high ground above Fareham should be occupied by a work as from it the dockyard could be commanded. He referred to the Defence Committee's recommendation of 1860 that an outer line of works in advance of the Elson Gomer Line be constructed. The situation had now changed as the present conditions of attack dictated some modifications to the scheme. Additional works in front of Fareham were necessary and the Committee considered that these works could be supplemented in time of war by field works occupying a line between the left flank of the Portsdown Hill defences and the solent.

A report of 1874 described Fort Fareham as being "nearly completed".

The Design

Like the other forts of the Portsmouth land defences, Fort Fareham was constructed according to the latest system of Polygonal Fortification, so named because of the shape of the forts. The Prussian System, as it was known, called for a series of detached, self sufficient but mutually aiding forts whose fields of fire interlocked and thereby provided flanking fire across the faces of each fort adjoining. Fort Fareham consisted of a pentagon whose sides measure 231, 176, 313, 364 and 400 feet respectively. Its main armament was to be placed on a west facing rampart with flanking armament on the north rampart to provide fire across the Fareham gap towards Fort Wallington on Portsdown Hill. A newspaper of 1864 pointed out that as Fareham town stood between the two forts it was likely to receive the largest share of the fire intended for the enemy. The Southern ramparts provided flanking fire towards the Inner Gosport Advanced Lines of the Gomer Elson Forts. At the angles of the ramparts and projecting out into the ditches were bomb proof buildings called caponiers. These provided local defence for the fort. Guns mounted in them could fire along the length of each ditch and along the base of each rampart. The main West Caponier was a double one with positions for guns firing in two directions. The other three caponiers were single ones with guns facing in one direction only. The rear of the fort was protected by an earthen 'V' shaped redan upon which guns could also be mounted. A concealed mortar battery at the north provided intermediate range defence.

The Ramparts

A central ramp provides access to the rampart. Either side of it, on the west rampart, are four Disappearing Gun pits built in pairs. A fifth one is positioned to the left of the stairs on the north rampart. All five are an earlier version, the brick powder magazines being built separately. Later versions had shell and cartridge recesses cast into the concrete emplacement. These pits were not on

the original plans for the fort and they probably date from the 1892 remodelling of all the land forts. There is no proof of the Moncrieff gun mountings being provided in any of Portsmouth's land forts despite the fact that many pits were constructed.

The Ramparts have a variety of different casemated gun galleries called Haxo Casemates. A two gun gallery on the South Rampart just above the bread and meat store, a six gun gallery on the South West Rampart above the shell store and another two gun gallery on the South West Rampart above the main magazine are all completely closed to the rear. They are built of brick tunnel vaulting and are entered from the sides. They were built as an upper storey to the rooms below which support their weight and it was intended to provide them with shell lifts although no evidence of such a feature now exists in the casemates apart from the lifting rings. To the rear of each gun position is a vent rising up through the roof. The guns were to have been mounted on traversing platforms which ran on iron racers set into the floor. Merlons were added and the presence of glazed bricks at the angles suggests that the original intention was to protect these also with an earth covering. It seems likely that this covering was provided and that it has been removed in recent years.

An earth bank, or parapet, provided cover for the troops travelling from one Haxo to the other.

The largest of the three enclosed Haxos is angled so that pairs of guns cover a slightly different field of fire. The rest of the gun positions on the Ramparts are of a more common Haxo style. The South West one has positions for two guns with a position between for storage or shelter. Each of its gun positions has a circular shaft, for hoisting powder and shells, connecting with the rooms below the Rampart. The rear is completely open. The West facing Haxo was similar. It had an observation position for the Gun Commander on top. It was removed during the Summer of 1981 and the Rampart levelled because of water leaking into the rooms below. The North Haxo is a single one and is built like a room. It has a door and two windows to the rear. A brick blast wall protects the doorway. This wall originally arched over the entrance but it has now collapsed. On the left side of the gun position is a small alcove set into the wall. A circular shaft runs from it down to a room below. An iron ring is fixed into the roof of the alcove to facilitate hoisting of ammunition. Unlike the other shell hoists which are built in alcoves that are a man's height, this alcove is only two feet high. Directly behind this Haxo two flights of steps connect the rampart with the Parade. Further along the North Rampart is a large two gun Haxo. It is protected to the rear by a brick wall with an arched roof connecting it to the casemate. There are no signs of shell hoists. At a later date an observation post was built on top of this Haxo. Another two gun Haxo on the North West Rampart brings the total of casemated gun positions on the Ramparts to nineteen.

The largest concentration of guns and the most heavily protected are on the South and South West Ramparts. They were to provide a heavy concentration of gun fire to the south of the Fort should an enemy force try to slip between Fort Fareham and the Gosport Advanced Lines (Gomer - Elson Line) to attack the dockyard from the West.

Mortar Battery

To the West of the North Caponier is a Mortar Battery. It consists of three open fronted casemates with an open space in front, which is protected from horizontal fire by the North West Scarp. The casemates were vented to their rear to provide a means of clearing them of smoke on firing. The earth of the rampart has since subsided into the vent, totally blocking it and partially filling the casemates. To the right of this space is the passage from the parade to the North Caponier. This also gave access to the Mortar Battery which is outside the line of the Rampart. The access door from the tunnel to the North Caponier has been blocked off. At the time of writing the mortar battery is overgrown with brambles

an ivy. The coping stones have been pushed down into the battery and fairly mature trees have grown up within the space in front of the casemates.

In 1862 experiments were carried out at Fort Fareham to determine the effects of firing a mortar in a casemate. Trouble was experienced with reverberations which took place instantly upon the firing of the mortars.

An armament return of 1876 includes 3 rifled howitzers which were often used to replace 13 inch mortars when they lost favour.

West Caponier

The main West Caponier is wedge shaped and has positions for three guns facing each way. The access tunnel to the West Caponier is under the central ramp. Going down the tunnel, two doors to the right lead to the Corporal's Room and a Store whilst two doors to the left lead to the Ablution Room. Further down, the rear connecting passages of the west Casemates join the tunnel on either side. The Caponier itself has an expense magazine on the left as you enter and a flanking gallery for musketry on either side, each with two sets of loopholes firing along the face of the caponier. Beyond this are the two sally port doors which lead out onto the Berm on either side. Two gun ports on each side of the Caponier fire along the Berm whilst the third gun port on each side fires along the wet moat. At the edge of the Berm, separating it from the moat, was an 'unclimbable fence'. Parts of this fence can still be seen along the South and South West moat, which still holds some water. The West end of the West Caponier has no gun ports but does have rifle loopholes which allow fire to be directed downwards into the end recesses of the caponier should the enemy try fixing charges to the end wall. Further loopholes provide rifle fire westwards and a loophole is provided on either side of the gunports which flank the moat. The gunports themselves are set back into the Caponier to prevent enfilading fire from entering. Some of the gunports have had a ventilator/window added above at a later date. No racers are left in place and the West caponier has been used as a store for some years. A serious fire in 1989 caused considerable spalling to the roof arches. There is no earth Redan to the west, protecting the West Caponier from direct fire, as at the three centre forts of the Gomer Elson Line. (Brockhurst, Rowner and Grange). Instead, the Caponier is sufficiently protected by the high covered way and the counterscarp.

Demi-Caponiers

The South also has two Demi-Caponiers providing flanking fire along the moat whilst the North has only one Demi-Caponier. Each Demi-Caponier has positions for three guns firing in one direction. On either side of each of the gun ports are loopholes for rifles. Each caponier has an expense magazine and a flanking gallery for rifles. The plan of each demi-caponier is the same with a few minor differences in outline. In the end of each caponier steps lead down to a rifle gallery which provides flanking fire for the end of the caponier as well as two loopholes to fire along the moat.

The Magazines

The main magazines and shell stores are under the south rampart. A davit is placed just to the rear of the six gun haxo, above the entrance of the tunnel to the south Caponier. Up until 1986, the pulley was still in place on the davit. This appears to be a method of raising the shells to the south rampart. Part way along the tunnel is the entrance to cartridge stores no. 7 and 8 and shell stores no. 7, 8 and 9. This magazine is the same in shape in plan as the six gun haxo which forms the upper storey to it. Opposite the entrance to this larger store is a back entrance to an equipment magazine which forms part of shell store no. 10. Plans were approved for the construction of lifts from the magazines to the Haxo

casemates above so that the storage and supply of ammunition would be :-
' *safe commodious and convenient* '.

It appears that lifts were constructed, as the cartridge and shell stores have circular recesses in the walls to take the machinery of the winding gear, together with circular holes in the ceiling, now sealed with concrete. These circular shafts emerged in the floor of the six gun Haxo above, in the forward alcoves separating each gun position, with the exception of lift number five which emerged to the rear of the extreme right hand gun position. The labelling for each lift is still visible on the walls of the magazine. Lifts 1 to 5 were in the larger shell stores whilst lift number 6 was in the smaller shell store number 10. No trace of the shafts can be seen in the Haxo above which suggests that the whole floor of the Haxo was re-concreted at the time that the lifts were blocked off. In the end of the larger shell and cartridge store is another equipment magazine which still has the lettering above the door. Either side of the doorway is a lamp shaft allowing the room to be lighted with lamps passed in from the outside. Just outside this is a vestibule which had wooden coat pegs and is lined with stone blocks instead of the usual plain brick finish. This was originally separated from the rest of the store by a wooden partition and it obviously served as a shifting room. It had the winding gear and shaft for shell lift number five within it. Perhaps this shell lift was an alternative lift, should any of the others be put out of action, as it was placed to the rear of the casemates whilst all the others emerged to the front and were therefore more vulnerable. The filled shell stores are closed off from the main body of the stores forming individual rooms, each with a lamp shaft either side of the entrance door.

The Main Magazine was approached from another tunnel under the south west rampart. It consists of a brick tunnel vaulted chamber divided into three sections and forming the lower storey to a two gun Haxo casemate above. Opposite the entrance to the magazine is Shell Store number 6. Built into the entrance passage to the magazine is the shifting lobby through which you must pass to enter the magazine itself. Two lamp rooms and an access room to the lighting passage also lead off from the main entrance tunnel. The lighting passage on the outer side of the magazine connects with the entrance passage to the south west caponier.

The Parade and Casemates

The casemated barracks are built under the north and west ramparts. A passage connects the rear of the barrack casemates to each other and to the passages leading to the caponiers. This was a safe means of moving from the barrack rooms to the caponiers and the ramparts without crossing the parade, under bombardment.

The officers' mess is situated in the north corner of the fort. It had a very ornate interior and consisted of a billiard room as well as a dining room and wine store. Accommodation for single officers and their servants is also situated under the north rampart. Further to the west are barrack rooms for 18 men, cook house and stores, married quarters and miscellaneous rooms, sergeants' mess and women's wash house. A bread and meat store is built under the south rampart as the lower storey to the extreme southern Haxo casemate. It was brick vaulted, like the shell stores and magazines, with three bays. A system of vents to a cavity allowed the store to be kept cool and dry. A tunnel, just inside the entrance to the fort, gave access to this store.

In 1862 the combined Committees calculated the barrack accommodation for Fort Fareham to be for a half war garrison. A full garrison was calculated to be 20 men per gun on the main rampart.

Quoted barrack accommodation was for eight officers, 210 non-commissioned officers and men, five staff sergeants and eight hospital patients. Under the casemate end of the gun ramp was the men's and N.C.O.'s latrines.

The parade ground had various buildings on it which have long since gone. Some of these were a guard room, stables, vehicle and gun sheds, workshops and stores. The northern terreplein and the casemates underneath it were defiladed by a traverse which crossed the parade joining the existing parados which covered the Gorge wall and the redan thrown from its centre. The Gorge wall was provided with gunports between firing steps which provided some rifle fire over the top of the wall.

The Redan

To the east, an earth Redan projects beyond the enceinte of the fort to form a gun platform for gunfire to the rear of the fort. This earth redan has an expense magazine on each flank to serve the guns on the terre-plein. An earth ramp provides access to each arm of the redan. Between the redan and the traverse was a vehicle shed and an Artificer's Shop.

The Fort in Action

On 15th. October 1878 Fort Fareham and the surrounding countryside was the scene of a 'Sham Attack' and inspection of troops by the Duke of Cambridge. Garrison Artillery, Royal Marines and Volunteers took part in the operations. The fort was manned by a battery of Garrison Artillery and the 2nd. Battalion of the Hampshire Volunteers whilst the Royal Marine Light Infantry took up position a quarter of a mile from the fort.

Evening News Saturday 12/10/1878 pp2

"THE SHAM FIGHT ON PORTS-DOWN HILL" - The Programme

The annual inspection by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, Field Marshall Commander-in-Chief, of the Portsmouth and Gosport garrisons will take place on Tuesday, next, on which day he will arrive at Fareham from London.

The whole of the troops of the garrison will be concentrated at the former place, and a sham fight on rather an elaborate scale will take place.

The following is the official programme:-

An invading army having effected a landing on the south coast,, detaches two corps with instructions to march on the garrison army of Portsmouth, and to destroy the Dockyard if possible, any loss which may be incurred being of little consequence, provided the latter part of the instructions be carried out.

The enemy's general finds the line of defence to be Hayling Island, Portsdown Hill, Fareham Common, and the Titchfield Stream.

Hayling Island although protected by field works only, has he considers, such strong secondary defences in the differing water channels that it would not be advisable to attack on that side.

Portsdown Hill is impregnable: but the high ground between Fareham Tunnel and Titchfield, if gained, would give a commanding position for Artillery assisting in an attack on the isolated Fort Fareham.

If that place can be captured, howitzer batteries could be established in the gap between Forts Wallington and Elson, within bombarding distance of the Dockyard. A reconnaissance discloses to the enemy that the line between Wallington Stream and Titchfield River is defended by hastily constructed field works only, and that the undulating ground there favours an attack.

The attack is supposed to be made, and to be so successful that the defenders, few of whom are regular troops, are forced to take refuge behind the guns of the Gosport Forts, their general line being; Lower Quay, Fareham, Fort fareham, the railway to Brockhurst, and the forts referred to.

The main body of the defenders being concentrated behind the outposts of the contending forces, it will be necessary to protect the right of the assaulting parties from any counter attack when advancing on Fort Fareham.

With this object in view, Stubbington is supposed to be entrenched and a defensive line carried along the road by Burnt House and back to Newland's Farm.

On the left of the attacking line, where the railway embankments would greatly favour an attack on the rear of the forts, it will be necessary to suppose that part of Fareham has been destroyed, and the eastern portion entrenched by the defenders. The line of demarcation between the forces on the northern flank will therefore be the railway from, Fort Fareham to the station, thence to Wallington Bridge, and northwards by Wallington Stream.

To protect any diversion on that side by the defenders, the ground from Upland House along the main road by Roach Court is to be considered as prepared and strongly held.

Under cover of numerous batteries of field artillery and position guns on Fareham Common and Titchfield Common, an attempt is now made to carry Fort Fareham by assault.

The forces will be distributed as under :

Attack :

Colonel Mawbey, Royal Marine Artillery Commanding.

Strength *1st. Brigade*
 Liet-Col Lockhart, 107th. foot commanding
 Concentrate in the vicinity of Heathfield House
6 guns 16 p.r. battery 4th. Brig.R.A.
 1100 R.M.A. (2 Battalions)
 460 109th. Regiment

A quarter of a mile down the fareham Road in a field road which leads on to the open ground in front of the fort. To send forward a piquet, which will shelter in the grounds of Black Brook Cottage (Capt. Purvis) and to observe the road leading under the railway arch, and the north side of the fort.

420 2nd. Batt. 12th. Reg.
 2nd. Brigade
 Lieut-Col. Hume, 55th Foot Commanding

Newlands Farm -

a piquet of the 55th. regiment being posted at the elbow of Tanner Lane, where the lane turns towards Newgate Lane.

6 guns 9 p.r. Battery, 4th brigade R.A.
 465 55th. Regiment
 360 107th. Regiment
 2825 men
 12 guns all troops in position by 10.15 a.m.

Defence

Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon, Royal Artillery, Commanding

Strength
 500 Royal Marine Light Infantry In Newgate Lane
 360 Volunteers Quarter of a mile south of Fort Fareham.
 300 Battery of Garrison Artillery In Fort Fareham

1160 Colonel Carey R.A. Commanding

all troops to be in position by 10.15 a.m.

109th. POW. Leinster Regiment
12th. Suffolk Regiment/post 1881
55th. Border Regiment/post 1881
107th. Sussex Regiment/post 1881

Evening News Wednesday 16/10/1878 pp3

“THE REVIEW AND SHAM FIGHT”

The Duke of Cambridge arrived at Fareham from London yesterday morning, and was received by Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Lieutenant-General commanding the southern (district ?). A sham fight took place in the presence of His Royal Highness on Portsdown Hill, the forces being composed as follows :-

Attacking force under Col. Adair R.M.A. Commanding.

The cavalry consisted of one troop of the 5th.Lancers. The First Brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel Lockhart, 109th. Regiment consisted of the 24th. Royal Engineers, two battalions of the 12th. and 109th. Regiments, and 4th. Brigade Royal Artillery with six - 16 pounder guns.

The 21st. Brigade under Lieutenant-Colonel Hume, 55th. Regiment, composed the 55th. and 107th. Regiment and 4th. Brigade of Royal Artillery, with six- 9 pounder guns - in all 2825 men.

The defending force consisted of one brigade under the general command of Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon. R.A. The battery of garrison artillery and the 2nd. Battalion of the Hampshire Volunteers, which took up a position inside Fort Fareham, were under Colonel Carey. R.A.; the Royal Marine Light Infantry being a quarter of a mile from the fort as a reserve force.

The defence therefore devolved on only 1160 men.

The umpires were Col. H.A. Smythe, assisted by Col. French. R.A.; Major Elliot, 11th. Brigade Depot; Captain Marsden D.A.A.G.; Captain Warry. R.A. and Captain Mallock.

The cause of the action was supposed to be the landing of an invading force on the south coast, who detached two corps, with instructions to mask the garrison army of Portsmouth, and if possible, to destroy the dockyard. The lines of defence were Hayling Island, Portsdown Hill, Fareham Common, and the Titchfield Stream, and the signal for action was fired shortly before 11 o'clock from Fort Fareham, the centre of the defending line, where the garrison artillery were posted.

The field guns kept up a regular fire, which was answered from Fort fareham. The attacking infantry were quickly within range and maintained a smart fire of musketry driving the artillerymen from their positions. The marines were also subject to a hot fire, and had to retire upon their supports. The Volunteer battalion during the early part of the fight was not attacked with any force, being apparently unnoticed, but after a time vigorous assault was made upon the hedges under which they were intrenched, but this proved ineffectual, in consequence of the admirable position the volunteers had obtained.

Eventually there was, however, a danger of their being cut-off from the main defending force, and they beat a retreat in the direction o Fort Fareham. The fusillade was maintained with great spirit by both sides, but the stock of ammunition of the defenders became exhausted and they were obliged to seek shelter in the rear of the fort, which the attacking party made an unsuccessful attempt to carry.

this concluded the action, and after a short interval the whole of the troops marched to open ground between Forts Gomer , and Grange, where they were drawn up in line of Brigade, in readiness for marching past.

The Duke of Cambridge was received with a royal salute and the march past then commenced, the Marine Artillery band being at the head of the troops, the marching was very steady.

A few brigade movements were afterwards gone through, and the troops then resumed their original positions, and advanced in review order, again firing a royal salute, which terminated the days's work.

The Field-Marshal Commanding-In-Chief then called the officers together, and whilst approving of most of the movements, expressed dissatisfaction at the manner in which some of them had been carried out particularly directing attention to the loose manner in which the officers' salutes were given.....today (he) will inspect the soldiers stationed on the Isle Of Wight.

Armament of Fort Fareham

Originally the total armament of the fort was to be 41 guns of which 19 were in Haxo Casemates on the ramparts. Seven guns were to be placed in the Redan which flanks the Gorge. Fifteen were to be mounted in the three Demi-Caponieres and one Full Caponier which flank the ditches. Three mortars were also to be mounted.

Proposed Armament Return 1876

49 x 7 inch R.B.L

5 x 64 pdr. R.M.L.on centre-weight carriages. (changed to 7 inch RBL)

3 x Rifled Howitzers.

15 x S.B. flank guns.

Total 72 guns.

Table of Armaments 1886

Approved	Mounted	Proposed	
64 x 7 inch R.B.L.			
5 x 40 pdr. R.B.L.	1 x 7 inch R.B.L.		
5 x 64 pdr. R.M.L.	2 x 6.3 inch R.M.L.	15 x 7 inch R.B.L.	15 x 32 pdr. S.B.B.L. Howitzers
3 x Rifled Howitzers.			

Armament about 1892. (all probably 7 inch R.B.L.)

10 guns in the emplacements on the south rampart.

5 guns in the Disappearing Gun Pits.

10 movable guns. 4 x 4 inch B.L.

6 x 40 pdr. R.B.L.

This movable armament was to be used in conjunction with movable armament in the Gomer Elson Lines to hold the advanced position, as yet unoccupied by permanent defences, from Catisfield Hill by Tichfield River to the sea.

An armament return of 1898 shows the following armament mounted :-

4 x 4 inch B.L.

6 x 40 pdr. R.M.L.

15 x 7 inch R.M.L.

No alterations were approved or proposed, neither reductions or additions.

The Later Years

By 1902 the armament of the land forts was withdrawn. In 1905 the Portsmouth Fortress defence Scheme called for the occupation of Fort Fareham during the precautionary period by 44 men of No. 23 Company Royal Garrison Artillery, and members of the 3rd. Battalion Oxfordshire Light Infantry Militia. They were to use the fort as a base to meet an attack from the west assuming that the enemy had captured or marched around Southampton. They were to be supplemented after mobilisation by 3 officers and 66 men from the 2nd. Hampshire Royal Garrison Artillery. The 1st. Volunteer Brigade Hampshire Regiment were to provide men for administrative purposes only. Movable armament for use in the Fareham gap was stored at Fort Fareham. This consisted of 4 x 15 pdr. B.L.s, 4 x 4 inch B.L.s and 4 x 40pdr. R.M.L.s.

In April 1907 the 108th. Heavy Brigade Royal Garrison Artillery was stationed at Fort Fareham. The Evening news reported on 4th. May 1907 that the Army wanted a reduction in the charge for water supplies to them at the fort. Domestic consumers in fareham paid 6d. per 1000 gallons whilst the army paid 10d. for the same amount. It stated that the 1st. Heavy Brigade was likely to be stationed at Fort Fareham and wanted a more equitable charge. They had taken up residence by 1908.

Fort Fareham was used as a barracks right up to the Second World War.

During the Second World War, in 1941 Fort Fareham was used as Brigade H.Q. for 124 Heavy Anti Aircraft Regiment and as H.Q.s for 410 battery 45 AA Brigade, 412 battery 65 AA Brigade and 415 Battery 27th. AA Brigade.

An Actions Stations exercise for 35 AA Brigade in 1942 outlined the defence of the fort against all attacks. There was to be no withdrawal. The defenders were to be equipped with a Tommy gun, a Lewis gun rifles, hand grenades and Molotoff Bombs. Weapons pits were constructed on strategic parts of the ramparts and brick and concrete pill boxes built on top of each of the four caponiers. Two men were also placed in each caponier to man the rifle slits. The weapon pit on the North rampart served as

an Anti-Aircraft and Ground Defence Post.

The fort became surplus to requirements in 1965 when it was sold by the Ministry of Defence to Fareham Urban Council.

The Fort Today

The fort had only one entrance, unlike all of the others of the same period, both on Portsdown Hill and in the Brockhurst/ Grange line, which had two. This entrance was approached over a single lane bridge, the end of which operated as a drawbridge. The iron railings of this bridge are still in place although the access road has now been widened to two lanes by an infilling of the moat parallel to the bridge. The guard room which stood on the left of the entrance has been demolished. Inside the entrance the road passes through the earth traverse and onto the parade, which is now completely occupied by various building of a modern Industrial Estate. Most of the casemates and some of the caponiers are sub-let as industrial units. Many of the casemate fronts have been fairly accurately restored by the tenants although some have been allowed to decay and fall into disrepair. The Main magazine served for a brief period as Fareham Council's Home Defence Control Centre, to be used by the council's chosen few in the event of a nuclear attack. It now appears to be redundant.

The moat was partially cleared in the late 1980s by Fareham Council with volunteer help from people of the adjoining housing estate (Fort Fareham Conservationists, now disbanded). The surrounding wooded scarp, covered way and glacis now forms an area of wildground which seems to be managed by Fareham Council. A series of paths with seats at intervals provides a continuous walkway around the outer perimeter of the moat. The section of moat from the West Caponier to the gorge is partially filled with water and the volunteer group stocked this with mallards, coots, moorhens and kingfishers in 1981. The section of moat from the Redan to the West Caponier is mainly dry. Here, the cunette is visible along the centre of the moat.

(c) David Moore July 1989 - Updated 1993

Sources

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