

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.

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