

Stokes Bay Lines

Commenced	1857
Completed	1861
Cost	£ 75120
Map Reference	SZ586989 TO SZ608978
Position	Gosport - West/Stokes Bay
Type	Rampart & ditch + 5 batteries
Ditch	Wet (one side only extant)
Guns	39
Barrack Accom.	(Provided in Fort Gomer)
Present use	Moat filled in but some batteries and course of moat remains.
History	No.2 battery Moat filled in 1950s Nos 1, 3 & 4 dismantled
Disposal	Route of moat can be followed
Condition	Mostly destroyed
Access	Open access to most o the route
Sources	Stokes Bay Defences - D.Moore

Armament

1872	21 x 8-inch S.B. & 9 x 68 pr.
1898	No.1 2 x 7-inch RBL No.2 8 x 7-inch RBL 2 x 7-inch RML on Moncrieff No.3 3 x 7-inch RBL No.4 4 x 7-inch RBL No.5 4 x 7-inch RBL
1900	19 Maxim machine guns
1901	No.2 battery 2 x 6-inch BL Mk VII
1906	No.2 2 x 6-inch BL & 6 MMG No.3 2 x MMG
1905-07	disarmed

Caponiers None

Counterscarp galleries None

Haxo casemates None

Moncrieff Pits 2

History and Description

In the 1840s and 50s the possibility of a French landing at Stokes Bay caused some concern and three batteries were built along the bay to counter this, two at Browndown Point and one at Gilkicker Point. All three were simple earth ramparts with little to protect them from direct assault. In 1857 Major Jervois proposed a complex system of moats, ramparts and batteries to close off the gap between the new fort at Gomer and the earlier fort at Gilkicker, Fort Monckton. This defensive moat was to become the 'Stokes Bay Lines'. It ran from the rear of the Browndown batteries in the west to the glacis of Fort Monckton in the east and consisted of a ditch with rampart and five flanking batteries of various traces. At the western end No.2 battery consisted of a sea facing rampart with four casemated guns to fire westwards across the gap between the Browndown Batteries and Fort Gomer. Three more casemated guns fired eastwards along the first branch of the moat running towards No.3 battery. No.1 battery was at the rear of No.2 straddling the only coast road to Browndown army ranges and Lee-on-the Solent. It also covered the rear of a dam constructed to flood the Gomer marshes in time of attack by closing off the River Alver. A tunnel connected No.1 battery to the parade of No.2. No.3 battery mounted three guns to fire westwards along the section of moat towards No.2 battery. At No.3 battery the moat turned south towards the sea for a short section before continuing eastward to the lake at Gilkicker. This section of moat was flanked by No.4 battery. No.5 battery was to the north of this section of moat and mounted nine guns facing seawards. The River Alver was diverted into the moat system at No.1 battery and flowed out of the moat to the sea at various sluices along its length and from another at Gilkicker lake, thus maintaining a constant water level in the moat. Another section of moat ran southwards from No.4 battery and branched east and then north to rejoin the main moat west of No.5 battery. This secured the open ground in front of No.5 battery and the railway line to Stokes Bay pier. A small section of moat continued from the north end of Gilkicker lake along the rear of Fort Monckton towards Haslar sea wall. No.1 battery was demolished in the 1930s. No trace remains apart from the tunnel and short section of rampart with concrete revetments. The site of No.3 battery is inside a garden. No.4 battery is recognisable but nothing remains. No5 battery is relatively intact. No.2 battery is the best preserved. It is a grade II listed building and was altered in the 1980s to become Gosport Council's Nuclear bunker. For a short period in 1994 it was opened briefly as a D-Day interpretation centre in 1994. In 2010 the Historical Diving Society took over the lease with a view to opening the east casemates as a small museum. The upper emplacements are fenced off and are inaccessible. It can be viewed from outside the fence. The parade is a private (council) residential estate.

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