

Fort Borstal

Commenced	Dec 1875 (1905 record plan states	Armament	
Completed	1876) 1883 (1905 record plan states	Never Armed	
Cost	£ 1899?)		
Map Reference	Not known		
Position	TQ 733664 East of Chatham	WWII 4.5inch AA Battery	
Type			
Ditch	Land front/ polygonal		
Guns	Dry		
Barrack Accom.	None		
Present use	6 Officers & 54 men being converted as private		
History	residence ?? R.A. maintenance unit Used by nearby eponymous Borstal Institution as store and pig farm until 1977	Caponiers	1
Disposal	Sold 1991	Counterscarp galleries	3
Condition	Good. Conserved, to be converted.		
Access	By arrangement with owners.	Haxo casemates	None
Sources	Unlikely Gulvin, 'Chatham's Concrete Ring'	Moncrieff Pits	None

History and Description

Borstal was not in the original plans of the 1860 Commission but was needed to defend the high ground overlooking the Medway at Borstal. Work began on Fort Borstal, by convict labour, in December 1875, following the completion of the nearby prison. It was completed 1883. The fort has a continuous rear gorge wall defended by a loopholes and a single caponier over which it was intended to build the access road. It is surrounded by a dry ditch defended by counterscarp galleries at the angles. The fort has two rows of casemates, the front two serving as a command area and the rear nine, providing barrack accommodation. The rear casemates were split into two in later years to provide an access road through to the front casemates. The gun positions on the ramparts were intended for movable armament served by handling rooms with expense magazines beneath. The fort served as barrack accommodation during WW1 and had a 4.5-inch A.A. battery on its rampart during WW2.

Its previous owners hoped to restore the fort and open it as a museum but this idea met with much local opposition from residents and the nearby Young Offender Institution and had to be abandoned. It is now intended to convert it for accommodation.

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