

## Fort Bridgewoods

<b>Commenced</b>	1879	<b>Armament</b>	
<b>Completed</b>	1892	Never Armed	
<b>Cost</b>	£ Not known	Wing battery on right flank for 3 guns.	
<b>Map Reference</b>	TQ 738652		
<b>Position</b>	South of Chatham		
<b>Type</b>	Land front/ polygonal		
<b>Ditch</b>	Dry		
<b>Guns</b>	Never armed		
<b>Barrack Accom.</b>			
<b>Present use</b>	Demolished		
<b>History</b>	Featured in 1907 siege operations. WW2 HQ for Home Guard, Royal Observer Corps and Civil Defence. AAOR 1953-68. Handed over to Home Office 1961, sold late 1970s.	<b>Caponiers</b>	None
<b>Disposal</b>	Demolished 1988. Nothing remains	<b>Counterscarp galleries</b>	Three intended Two built
<b>Condition</b>		<b>Haxo casemates</b>	None
<b>Access</b>		<b>Moncrieff Pits</b>	None
<b>Sources</b>	Gulvin, 'Chatham's Concrete Ring'		

### History and Description

Construction of Fort Bridgewoods began in 1879 but was halted in 1884, due to lack of funds, and the fort was not completed until 1892. Up until 1892 the parts constructed were the entrance, which had small flanking chambers each side of the doorway, the main magazines, the main casemates and two of the three proposed counterscarp galleries. The new invasion threat of 1892 led to the completion of the fort. There were two parade grounds. In the left half of the fort, off the tunnel to the left counterscarp gallery were the two main magazine chambers, whilst to the right were the expense magazines and troop casemates and the tunnel to the right counterscarp gallery. Each counterscarp gallery had its own small expense magazine. The fort had four large reservoir chambers. It appears that no permanent gun emplacements were provided on the ramparts of the fort. On the right of the fort, an earthen wing battery was constructed for six guns, probably field artillery. The fort suffered badly in the 1907 siege operations, having its main counterscarp gallery blown in. This gallery had a sally port allowing access to the ditch.

Prior to WWII, circa 1935, the fort became "WOYG" which gathered signals information for the War Office (War Office Wireless Interception Station) and passed them on to Bletchley Park. Hutted accommodation was built in the adjacent woods and other buildings were added to the parades of the fort. The facility was 'bombed out' in 1940? and moved to RAF Chicksand. Later in WWII the fort was occupied by the Home Guard, who manned light AA defences within the fort.

In 1953 the fort contained an Anti-Aircraft Operation Room for the Thames and Medway South fixed AA guns sites which remained operational until 1957. The fort was handed over to the Home Office in 1961 and until 1967 it was a Sub Regional Control Centre for the administration of South East London after a Nuclear attack, known as SRC 5.2. The 1968 Civil Defence cuts axed the Bridgewoods Centre (which was, in any case, far too close to the Naval Dockyard to have been safe). The fort was sold to a builder in the late 1970s and the ditch was filled. In 1982 a serious fire destroyed the AAOR. In 1988, despite the fort being listed as of Historic interest, it was demolished. Nothing of the fort is now visible. The site is occupied by a Parcellforce depot and it is rumoured that some underground portions of the fort may have survived.

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