

Shornmead Fort

Commenced	July 1861	Armament	
Completed	c.1870	1887	11 x 11-inch RMLs in casemates plus 3 x 9-inch RMLs in open battery.
Cost	£ 211,063 Estimated	1895	10 x 11-inch RMLs in casemates plus 3 x 9-inch and 2 x 6pr. QF in open batteries. 2 x 6-inch BLs in emplacements outside fort.
Map Reference	TQ 692 748	1913	2 x 12pdr QF
Position	South bank of River Thames Shorne Marshes	1940	2 x 5.5-inch BLs in emplacements 250m East of fort.
Type	Sea/river Defence	Caponiers	3
Ditch	Dry	Counterscarp galleries	None
Guns	14	Haxo casemates	None
Barrack Accom.	300 men proposed	Moncrieff Pits	None
Present use	Mostly demolished RSPB Nature Reserve		
History	Submarine Mining Depot		
Disposal	Abandoned and demolished 1960s		
Condition	Only fronts of casemates survive.		
Access	On open site (RSPB Reserve).		
Sources	Smith, Defending London's River. Wilson, Later 19th Century Defences of the Thames (Journal of the Socy. for Army Historical Research 1963)		

History and Description

Shornmead first existed as an open battery from 1795 mounting four 24 prs which was demolished in 1874. The later Shornmead Fort, like Coalhouse, was proposed as a replacement by the 1859 Commission due to its position on the bend in the river. It was also to form the anchor for a line of forts overland to Chatham, which were never built. It was originally to mount 14 guns on the roof behind a masonry parapet and shields, with 2 pivot guns and 20 guns beneath in shielded casemates. As with all the Thames forts there were difficulties with foundations and the plan was altered following subsidence. Cracking in the casemates was found during construction and the plan was altered in 1867 to allow 12 guns to be mounted in casemates looking down river and 8 at the other end in gun pits. After delays the fort was constructed with the usual semi-circular granite-faced casemated gun positions for twelve heavy RMLs with positions on the roof for 3 x 9-inch RMLs. As with Coalhouse there was a parade ground behind the casemates and a single storey defensible barrack block with a loopholed wall above closing off the gorge. In 1895 two 6pr. QFs were supplied in an open battery on the river bank. It was re-armed in about 1913 with 2 x 12 pr QFs. Between 1895 and 1907 Shornmead was disarmed completely and used for accommodation as part of the submarine mining depot to the west of the fort. During the Second World War two 5.5-inch guns were fitted in an external battery behind the sea wall to the east of the fort. The fort by now was used only for barrack accommodation.

Shornmead Fort was on an army firing range and has largely been demolished by the Royal Engineers of the Army School of Demolition, only the fronts of the RML casemates remaining. The magazines underneath are unsafe and flooded. The whole of the gorge rooms and barrack block has been demolished. In 2008 earth was piled against the rear of the fort closing off the magazine entrances. The fort has been tidied but what is left of the casemates is prone to vandalism. The site is now part of an RSPB Shorne Marshes Nature Reserve.

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