

# Fort Burgoyne & Connaught Barracks

*A talk by Jon Iveson reported by Alan Lee*

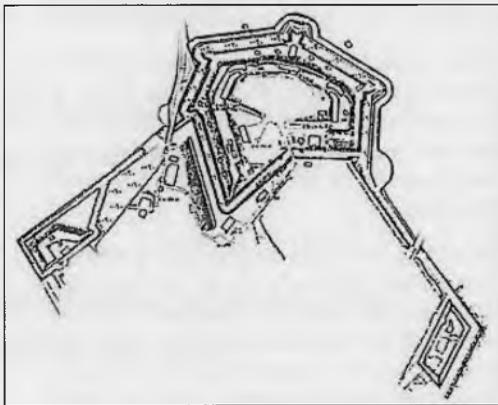
Following his recent article in the March issue of the Dover Society Newsletter Jon Iveson created a great deal of interest for the large audience in St Mary's hall. Beginning with the ancient history of the area he stated that there is not a lot known about the pre historic era. As we progress through time the site acquires a very significant meaning in the defence of England and later, during the two world wars for Britain and the free world.

One major event was the siege of Dover Castle in 1216-17 by Prince Louis of France, the eldest son of Philip Augustus. After securing Canterbury then Rochester Castle he entered London on the 21st May 1216. Gaining more support he took Winchester, then one of England's principal cities. Louis then turned his attention towards Dover Castle, the stronghold that blocked his line of communication with France. On his arrival Louis and his army spent several days camped in and around the town, but had not yet laid siege to the castle. The siege started in the middle of July, half his army remaining in the town and the remainder moving to the top of the hill about where Fort Burgoyne is today. His fleet put to sea and closed off the castle from that direction. Louis's troops breached the outer defences but the defenders managed to beat them back. He returned to the same spot in 1217 but again with the same outcome.

In 1859 a Royal Commission looked at the defences and recommended a fort be built on this high ground

overlooking the castle. In November 1860 approval was granted to acquire the land and the outline design approved by the Secretary of State for War. Work began in June 1861 and was completed in 1868 the construction costing £88,000. Named Castle Hill Fort it was soon renamed Fort Burgoyne in honour of General Burgoyne one of the experts consulted by the Commissioners.

Surrounded by a 35-foot wide ditch the fort is polygonal in shape and unusually is flanked by two wing redoubts connected to the fort by ditches. The Dover to Deal road crosses the eastern ditch and the Dover to Guston road crosses the western ditch. The fort was home to 270 men and 7 officers housed in casemated (bombproof from mortars) barracks situated around a central parade ground. Originally some of the guns were intended to be 7-inch Rifled Breech Loading guns but owing to some bad accidents and a poor standard of training these were replaced with the old



*Plan of Fort Burgoyne*

Connaught  
Barracks and  
Fort Burgoyne



style muzzleloaders. *For a fuller description please see article in March 2008 Newsletter.*

By 1906 the large guns had been removed and replaced by machine guns, while during the First World War brick gun emplacements were built. In the Second World War concrete gun emplacements were added and the fort became home to two batteries of 25 pounder field guns.

In June 1861 work also began on the construction of bombproof casemated barracks to house 1 Field Officer, 6 officers, 217 men and two horses. These barracks were built by civilian contractors at a total cost of £29,508 but the remainder of the work was completed by military labour.

In 1897 a hutted camp (Fort Burgoyne Huts also known as the red huts) was constructed adjacent to the fort on land previously occupied by Castle Hill Farm. In 1912-13 Fort Burgoyne Huts were replaced with Connaught Barracks.

In 1962 Connaught Barracks were demolished and new barracks built on the site by Messrs. C. Jenner and Son, of Folkestone, at a cost reported in a local newspaper of £750,000.

In October 2007 Connaught Barracks was purchased by English Partnerships, The National Regeneration Agency. The site covers 56 ha, of which 12.5 ha is suitable for a proposed 500 new eco friendly homes.

Fort Burgoyne will need to be greatly repaired and cleaned up. In the spring of 2009 English Partnerships will be inviting ideas as to what the Fort can be used for in the future whilst preserving the site for future generations.

It is intended that the development brief, which will be informed by an extensive public consultation programme, will be presented to Dover District Council Cabinet in autumn 2009. The site will be sold to a third party developer in the early months of 2010.

After taking questions from the audience the Chairman Derek Leach thanked Jon for a most enlightening talk.

Any members of the Dover Society who have ideas about the future use of Fort Burgoyne please contact any of the committee members so we can co-ordinate our response.