

APRIL MEETING

The Dover Castle Keep 1625 - 1930

A Talk by Paul Pattison

Reported by Alan Lee

The talk covered the period after the Great Tower ceased to be a place of occasional royal residence.

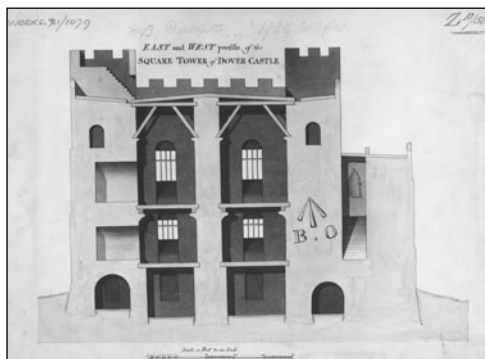
The Duke of Buckingham had refurbished the royal apartments for the use of Henrietta Maria of France on her way to marry Charles I. They were married by proxy on May 11th, 1625 and married in person on June 13th, 1626 at St. Augustine's Church in Canterbury. Henrietta was raised and educated as a Roman Catholic and as the coronation service was an Anglican one Henrietta could not be crowned as queen.

The Board of Trade then took over the Great Tower for use as a fortification. Under the leadership of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports they supplied a small permanent staff of gunners, artillery and ammunition.

By 1697 much of Dover Castle lay in decay and ruins. The Great Tower was in serious decline with only 3 or 4 of the Governor's rooms being habitable.

During the Nine Years War, 1688-97, Lord Shrewsbury, Secretary of State for the Southern Department arranged for Dover Castle to hold prisoners until they could be exchanged.

In June 1702 during the War of Spanish Succession, 1701-14, Mr Morris, Marshal of Dover Castle was instructed to take as many prisoners as possible. Owing to lack



East and West Profile Square Tower Dover Castle

of room at the castle the Major of Dover was also instructed to house prisoners in the town goal. The number held at Dover fluctuated between 160 and 604. As Dover Castle was a naval prison the majority of prisoners were naval or merchant seaman. Graffiti that they left can still be seen carved into the soft Caen stone of the Great Tower.

In 1717 William Osbourne, master carpenter, supervised repair work to the Great Tower. In 1726 timber removed from the tower was re-used in work at Constables Gate.

Again by 1736 most of the castle was in ruins. Only the Great Tower, a gunpowder magazine on the north side of the bailey and a stable against the outer east bailey wall were usable.

Paul then showed the audience a number

of slides of what the Great Tower looked like in the C18th.

The War of Austrian Succession, 1740-48, saw extensive renovation as Dover became a military garrison. The inner bailey and Palace Green were adapted to serve as barrack accommodation. A new great stairway was completed in 1751, the majority of renovations had been completed by 1755. By early November 1756 the castle could accommodate 14 companies, about 1050 men. The remainder of the 2 battalions were quartered in Dover town or in the new barracks at Archcliffe Fort.

Between 1797 and 1815, owing to the conflict with France, the garrison increased dramatically as did the number of guns on the Great Tower. Separate magazines held 8740 barrels of gunpowder, each weighing 100lbs. The main magazine on the side of the tower survived until 1930, the inner doorway is still in use today. At the end of the war came another 25 years of neglect.

In 1853 and for the next 17 years Palace and King's gates were developed, both with counter-balanced drop bridges over deep pits. Towers and a musketry parapet were constructed around the inner bailey wall.

By 1892 the 10 guns on the roof of the tower had been removed. Fort Burgoyne had taken over. The remains of 2 gun arcs are still visible on the roof.

Up until 1930 the Great Tower continued as an Ordnance store that now included chemical explosives, small arms, ammunition, equipment and clothing. In the 1920's the 1st and 2nd floors held racks containing some 20,000 rifles.

In 1888/89 the eastern end of the main

room on the second floor had become a 'Banqueting Hall' for officers.

Through WWI the ground floor of the tower was used as a general store for the Army Ordnance Department. A searchlight was installed on one of the turrets, operated by the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve AA Corps. It served the Royal Garrison Artillery anti-aircraft guns sited near St Mary-in Castro.

Owing to the increased fire risk the War Office had removed all of the military stores by July 1930. By September of that year they had ceded the building to the Office of Works. Restoration work commenced immediately so that the Great Tower could be opened to members of the public. In 1931/32 25,000 people had visited the tower.

By 1935 most of the evidence of the 250 year military tenure had gone. Much of the present appearance of the Great Tower stems from this period of work.



Great Tower from Curtain Wall