

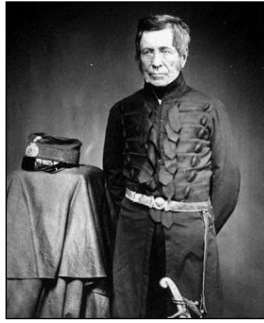
Field Marshal Sir John Fox Burgoyne

Barry O'Brien - Dover Tales

Born the illegitimate son of widower General John Burgoyne and opera singer Susan Caulfield, Burgoyne was educated at Eton and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich being commissioned into the Royal Engineers as a Second Lieutenant in 1798.

Burgoyne saw action at the 1801 Siege of Alexandria and, during the Peninsular War, served, firstly, as Commanding Engineer to Sir John Moore, and, at both the Siege of Badajoz and the Battle of Vitoria, to The Duke of Wellington. Chief engineer during the war of 1812 in North America Burgoyne was also official advisor to Lord Raglan prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War when he advised on the fortification of Constantinople as well as that of the Dardanelles. In 1831 Burgoyne took the post of Chairman of the Board of Public Works in Ireland. Having served copiously throughout the years, Burgoyne became Colonel Commandant of the Royal Engineers November 1854 and promoted to full General in September 1855. In January 1856 he was made a Baronet although despite advice given to Burgoyne at the time that title did not carry on to his heirs and the title no longer survives.

With growing concerns over the declining state of the country's ability to defend its shores the Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, wrote to Burgoyne on Aug 2nd, 1856, that he wished "very much to have a meeting with you at the Ordnance Office or at The Treasury, to go over with you all the plans of the defensive works at

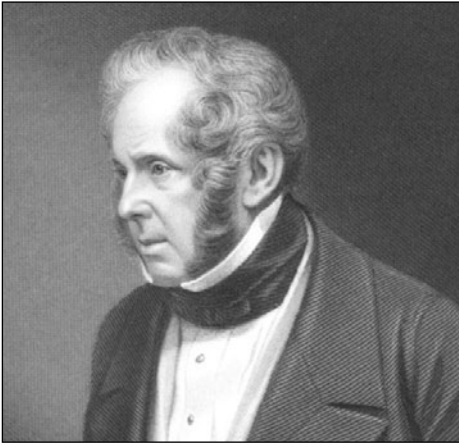


*Field Marshal
Sir John Fox Burgoyne*

home and abroad, now in progress of construction." Taking advantage of this favourable state of affairs Sir John devised a complete scheme for the fortification of home ports and Naval arsenals. These works might cost an estimated £4m and, it was calculated, would occupy some 64,400 serving men "they will not, however, require to be always at their posts. Many organised and

armed bodies that would be inefficient for a manoeuvring army in the field would be very appropriate for the fortifications, such as pensioners, Dockyard Battalions and Volunteers".

In 1858 the British Government received information of extensive and secret preparations for war being made on the part of the French Emperor Napoleon III. A secret committee was convened consisting of the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Seaton, Sir John Burgoyne, Sir Fenwick Williams, and Sir James Scarlett, with Major General Henry Storcks acting as Secretary, in order to consider the best means of preparing against any attempted invasion by French forces. Britain's military strength had improved slightly since the Crimean War, but the country continued to be involved with insurrection in India as well as a war with China, which meant there remained in the field an active force of some 37,500. There were approximately 42,000 "less efficient troops" which could extend to a maximum available force of some 115,000 should those numbers include those receiving military pensions, the Yeomanry and a



Lord Palmerston

militia which had received 'some degree' of training.

Whilst it was considered that a force of some 34,000 was the minimum needed to garrison the arsenals in England and the Channel Isles, it was estimated that an additional 100,000 effective troops would be needed should the enemy, even for a short while, achieve Naval superiority in The Channel with any new recruits needing a minimum four months training. Clearly, the country was in a perilous state.

With Palmerston's return to office, following a 15 month hiatus surrounding the events of the 1859 General Election, he determined to improve the defence of the nation's dockyards and proposed to Parliament to construct the necessary fortifications by means of a special loan additional to the previously allocated Military budget. With this objective in mind a Royal Commission was called to consist of six eminent Naval and Military officers, together with a civilian architect. Although Burgoyne did not sit on this committee, he did write an article for the

Westminster Review in support of the Royal Commission expressing 'his opinions on all the vexed questions of national defence' which included many of his earlier proposals to Palmerston and which would later form much of the basis for the Commission's final recommendations.

It was subsequently resolved that the military presence should be strengthened along the British and Irish coastlines, with new defences to be built at a number of key locations including the Bristol Channel, the River Clyde, the Channel Islands, Plymouth, Portland and Dover, the latter to include work at the Admiralty Pier Turret, Archcliffe Fort, the Dover Castle complex, Langdon Battery, the Western Heights complex and the construction of a fort at Castle Hill to be known, appropriately enough, as Castle Hill Fort although one reference suggests that it may, initially, have been proposed that it be named Fort George.

General Burgoyne identified the location from which the best defence of the Castle might be afforded and where the new fort would be constructed as the high ground to the north of Dover Castle.

Designed by Captain Edmund Du Cane RE, construction of Castle Hill Fort duly began in 1861 and was finally completed by the end of 1868 at a total cost of £88,053 [£9 million at a modern equivalent].

Having passed out of the Royal Military Academy aged 18, as head of his intake, Du Cane had previously spent 5 years in Australia overseeing the restructuring of the Convict Labour programme and was also engaged in the design of fortifications at Plymouth, and, later, Wormwood Scrubs prison in London; the prison is located in DuCane Road.



Fort Burgoyne

A member of a Royal Commission on Army Promotion Sir John Burgoyne was also a Permanent Member of The Defence Committee and President of the Army Signal Committee.

He served as Honorary Colonel of 1st Middlesex Engineer Volunteer Corps and of 1st Lancashire Engineer Volunteer Corps. In March 1852 he was made Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath and in Dec 1854 was one of 17 generals to receive the thanks of both Houses of Parliament for victory at Alma, the next month receiving similar acknowledgement for victory at Inkermann.

A Juror for the Great International Exhibition in Paris he was also an Honorary Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford University and was awarded a First Class Order of the Medjidie.

In 1856 Burgoyne was made a Fellow of the Royal Society, created a Baronet, and awarded the French Legion of Honour, 2nd Class. He served as a member of the War Office Committee to consider and report on the probable effect of rifled cannon on the attack and defence of fortifications and was President of the Committee ordered to inspect the War Department Magazines

and to report on the storage of gunpowder following the explosion of a large private powder magazine at Erith, Kent.

Given the Freedom of the City of London in 1868 Burgoyne was also appointed Constable of the Tower of London and, on his retirement January 1st, 1868, promoted to Field Marshal. He died at his Kensington, London, home on 7th October 1871 and is buried in the nearby Brompton Cemetery.

Castle Hill Fort in Dover was renamed Fort Burgoyne in his memory.

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Statue to Sir John Fox Burgoyne, Waterloo Place, London