

MARCH MEETING

Developing the Citadel

A talk by David de Min

Reported by Alan Lee

David de Min introduced himself as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Dover Citadel Limited who are at present the owners of the site. He then stated that he has been in Dover for six years and soon realised the opportunities that a large development in the area could bring.

The Citadel, part of the Western Heights complex, is one of the highest points in and around the town.

Commencing his presentation, David showed the audience a number of pictures of the area of the Citadel where the development is likely to take place. The area is a brownfield site of approximately thirty-three acres in size, including fifty-four buildings. The development is expected to take about ten years to complete and will include small business units. Permission has already been granted for six units, a hotel and possibly a leisure centre, though it is uncertain as yet what size or style this will take. The cost has been placed at between £80 to £100 million. Historic England, Dover



The Citadel, Western Heights Dover

District Council and English Heritage are involved as consultants on various aspects of the scheme.

David then ran through a potted history of the Citadel, when it was built and the reasons that the defence works came to be developed in Dover. A fortunate find was the discovery, in a drawer, of some original maps, hundreds of years old.

It is planned to display some of the history of the site to inform visitors of what the buildings used to be. The 1890 barracks are likely to be opened up as workshops for tradespeople including smiths and metal workers. Other uses will include a hotel, education and gallery spaces, more workshops and accommodation. A playing field and cycle track will be incorporated within the scheme. The company is also looking at ways to connect with the rest of the site, such as the Drop Redoubt and the Grand Shaft.

The most impressive building on the site is the bomb-proof, two-storey, Officers' Quarters and Mess with walls five foot thick. Built in 1860 by Major William Jervois it was designed, in part, to be one of the last points of defence in the event of the Citadel being stormed by the enemy. Research from English Heritage has found that there were originally eighteen rooms for officers, on the top floor, and nine for servants, on the ground floor suggesting that the latter lived two to a room. This building is expected to provide sixty to eighty rooms as part of a two

hundred to two hundred and fifty room hotel complex which will be of a strongly heritage-led design. Bearing in mind that the whole of this site is an ancient monument.

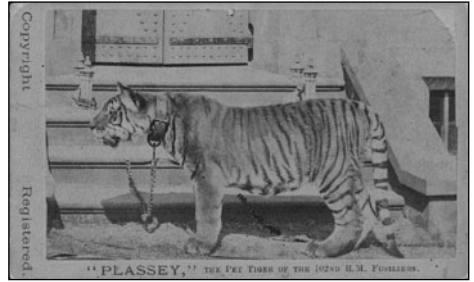
The area is home to some Napoleonic water towers with giant tanks on top. The wells beneath are some 450 feet deep, some of the deepest in the country, and have the capacity to supply 8,800 gallons per day. The company hope that they can utilize this resource as part of their own sustainable eco-system.

At present there few detailed plans, but when submitted they will also involve getting permission for scheduled monument consent.

The first defences on the Western Heights were constructed, by the militia, in 1779 during the American War of Independence. Between 1782 and 1796 the Drop Redoubt was constructed despite the fact that, in February 1782, the 1st Assistant Engineer in Dover, a Mr Bigges, was paying the labourers himself for want of money from the military authorities.

In 1804-5, with the threat of the Napoleonic invasion, work to greatly increase the fortification of this defensive position began in earnest. With four hundred and eighty men employed, much of the work, including the Grand Shaft, Grand Shaft Barracks and the hospital, was completed in three to four years, although the Citadel was not finished.

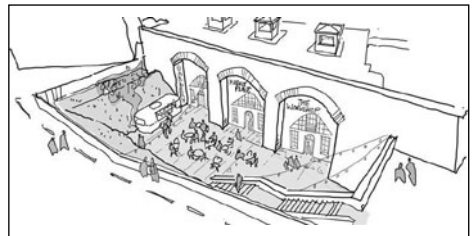
Improvements continued up until 1861 when the first infantry battalion moved to the Citadel. In 1870, the 102nd Regiment of Foot (Royal Madras Fusiliers) arrived with their pet Bengal tiger cub, Plassey. He was named after Robert Clive's famous victory of 23rd June 1757, which was also a battle honour of the Madras Fusiliers. The cap



Plassey

badge of their regiment depicted a tiger, a beast much respected in Indian culture for its strength, grace and power. Legend has it that he was fairly tame and, on arrival in the UK, lived unchained with the garrison at the Citadel. He used to be taken for morning walks down to the town, but apparently alarmed the local inhabitants on several occasions. As he grew larger, he was reluctantly sent to the local zoological gardens, where he eventually died.

In 1955, the Citadel officially became a Young Offenders' Borstal Prison and started accepting male detainees aged 18 and over. In 2000, Dover Immigration Removals Centre (IRC) took over, run by the Prison Service. It had a three hundred and fourteen bed capacity. This closed in 2015 and the Citadel was handed over to the Ministry of Justice. In 2020, Dover Citadel Limited acquired the site and in 2022 they received an £18 million government grant to develop it.



Architects sketch proposal of the Citadel