

Chinook swoops in with fort's new display

A MIGHTY Chinook helicopter swooped on Coalhouse Fort, East Tilbury, on Friday lunchtime delivering the latest exhibit for the fort project.

A Bofors gun swung beneath the RAF helicopter as it swept down the line of the Thames from Shoeburyness before landing in front of the 19th century fort.

As the behemoth settled on the grass, sending tree branches flying and spectators hunting for something solid to grab hold of, Army personnel raced out of the rear.

They re-attached the gun and the helicopter lifted off again, flying south and then returning to land the gun atop the fort walls.

Coalhouse Fort was built to protect London from attack by French troops under Napoleon III, but was also used during both World Wars this century.

The anti-aircraft gun brought by the helicopter is identical to many Bofors used at the fort in the Second World War and is believed to have been used in anger, targeting German aeroplanes during the Blitz.

It has been donated by the Ministry of Defence's weapon proof and testing division at Shoeburyness which has restored the gun to pristine condition.

Mr Davan Winch, chairman of the Coalhouse Fort Project, was on hand with others in Second World War Army uniforms to greet the latest addition to the fort's armoury.

Mr Winch said: "This gun is a Bofors

WORDS AND PICTURES: ANDY LEVER

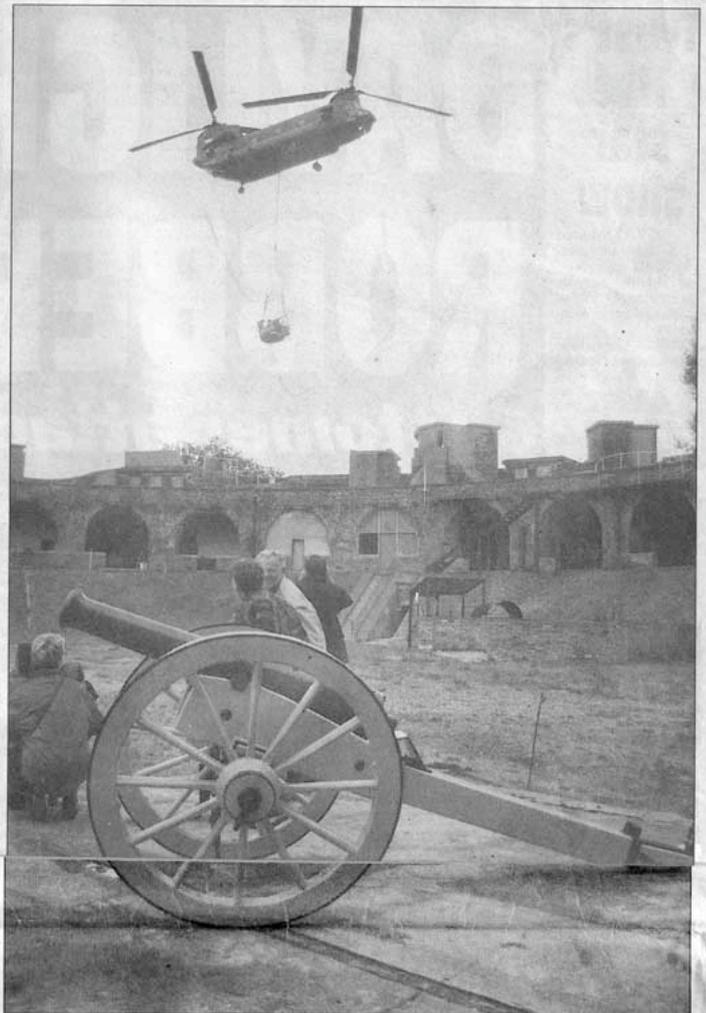
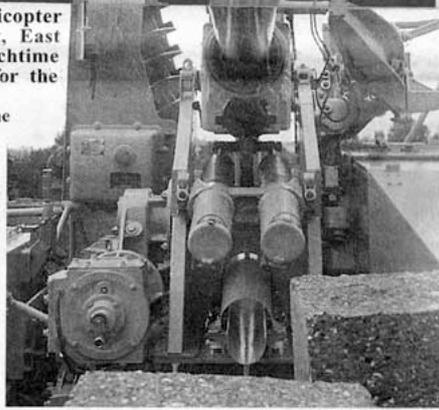
and has been restored to the same pattern which would have been at the fort.

"It's importance to us is that it is the only type of gun in the fort which actually fired in anger."

'Grateful'

He added: "We are very grateful to both the RAF and the Army for their help in transporting the gun."

The Fort's WW2 Display Team was formed in 1995 after the VE Day celebrations and now staffs the fort's 25pdr Field Gun in a living history role.

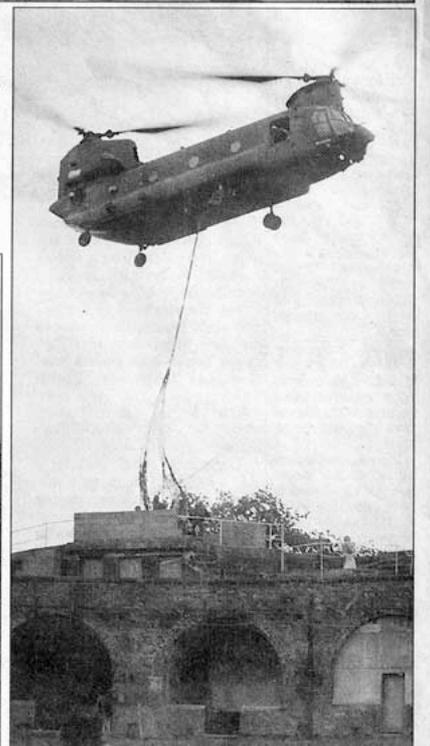


● Above: The RAF Chinook helicopter swoops above historic Coalhouse Fort ready to deliver the new Bofors anti-aircraft gun display.

● Right: Army personnel remove the ropes connecting the gun, now positioned on the fort's roof, to the helicopter.

● Left: The new Bofors gun in position.

● Below: The Army crew remove safety netting used to carry the gun sling below the helicopter.



TURN TO PAGES 32 AND 33 TO SEE COALHOUSE FORT'S ROYAL VISITOR