

THE CONVICT WORK CAMP

« LE CAMP DES FORÇATS »

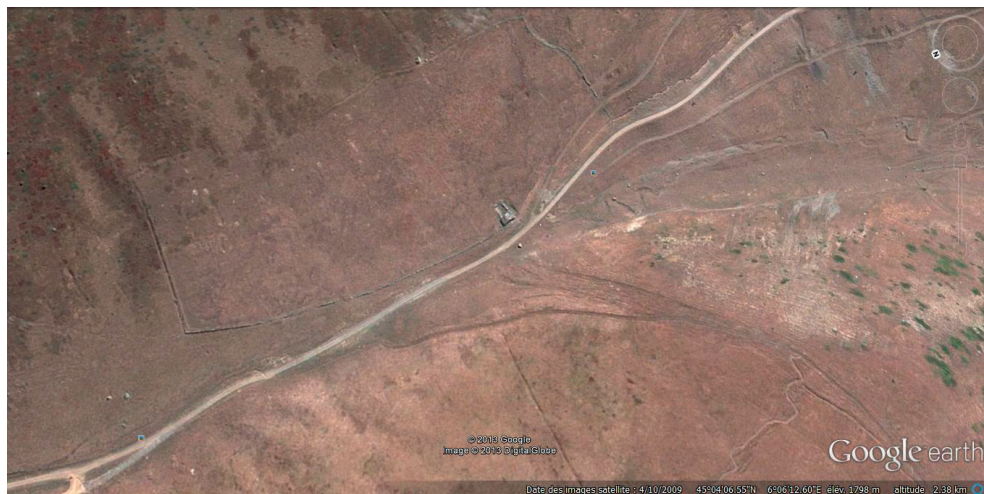
The convict work camp is a lightly fortified site, similar to those built by the Romans at many strategic points (passes, rivers) to protect themselves from Barbarian invasions which occurred from the 3rd century (clusurae).

The camp sits at an altitude of 1800m at the foot of Mont Buffes. From the camp the plateau of Alpe d'Huez can be seen to the north and the Romanche valley to the south.

Rectangular in shape, the camp measures 300m by 100m. There is a 90cm-high, 60cm-wide stone wall on three sides. The wall is built on a 2m-wide, 50cm-high bank, the bank having been created by digging a 1m-wide ditch outside the wall.

A camp such as this could shelter a few cohorts of Roman soldiers who would have been able to slow down an army attempting to cross the Alps.

There were also some fortifications opposite the camp, on the Homme Mountain. For example an old ditch can be discerned on photos.



THE ROMAN EMPIRE



ALPINE PASSES



DOWN • THE • CENTURIES: • CROSSING •

THE • WESTERN • ALPS

Date	Event	Mountain crossed
400 BC	Invasion of Northern Italy by the Gauls	??
218 BC	Hannibal crosses the Alps with 40,000 soldiers, 10,000 horsemen and 40 elephants	Mont Cenis
120 BC	Roman pacification campaign begins	Mont Genèvre
77 BC	Pompey crosses the Alps with 6 legions in order to go and fight in Spain	Mont Genèvre
58-50 BC	Conquest of Gall by Julius Caesar. Many crossings	Mont Genèvre Smaller St Bernard
9 BC	Total pacification by the Emperor Augustus	Mont Genèvre
400	Barbarian invasions from the 3rd century ; the Romans protect their frontiers ; invasion by the Burgunds in 442	??
1050-1349	The inhabitants of Dauphine control both sides of the Alps	Mont Genèvre
1494-1559	Italian wars (Charles VIII and Francis I)	Mont Genèvre Smaller St Bernard
1628-1750	Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV : wars against Spain, and Austria which controls Italy	Mont Genèvre Smaller St Bernard Great St Bernard
1794-1810	Napoleon's Italian campaign Creation of the Kingdom of Italy	Corniche Simplon Mont Cenis Mont Genèvre Smaller St Bernard Great St Bernard
1807-1863	Creation of the current route by Napoleon I; further work by Napoleon III	Mont Genèvre

THE • ROMANS • CROSS • THE • OISANS • VALLEY

- Between 50 BC and 100 AD, a major Roman route was created through the Oisans (cf Peutinger's Table). This fast route was maintained by Emperor Augustus and his successors: Tiberius, Claudius and Nero.

- It connects Turin to Lyons via Susa, Mont Genèvre, Briançon, the Lautaret pass, Villard d'Arènes, Mont de Lans, Bourg d'Oisans, Grenoble and Vienne.

- It is a difficult, abrupt route that requires constant maintenance.

- When the Roman Empire began to decline from the 3rd century AD, the route was gradually neglected and an easier, longer route via the Cluy pass - with more ups and downs was preferred. After passing through Villard d'Arènes, the longer route goes through Mizoën, Freney, Cluy, the Poutran pass, Oz and Grenoble.

