

The Lindemann Monument

Derek Leach

On the seafront facing Waterloo Crescent is a rather strange and now somewhat neglected monument from the Second World War called the Lindemann Monument that the Dover Society is trying to have restored. Why is it there, what does it commemorate and why is it called Lindemann?

Ernst Lindemann was a German naval officer who was awarded the Iron Cross during World War I. During the 1930s he was a lecturer at the German Naval Gunnery School and then Head of the Construction Department at the Naval High Command. In 1940 he was given command of the battleship *Bismarck* responsible for the sinking of the battleship *HMS Hood* and for damaging *HMS Prince of Wales*. However, less than a week later the Royal Navy sank the *Bismarck*. Lindemann went down with his ship.



Ernst Lindemann

Following the collapse of France in the Second World War, Germany built 24 formidable long range naval gun batteries containing 73 guns between Calais and Boulogne on the Channel coast. The first such site on the coast road going from Calais to Boulogne (half a mile inland to the left of the coastal road just past Sangatte) was named Lindemann Battery.

In only 10 weeks 14,400 cubic metres of reinforced concrete went into the construction of Lindemann.

Each gun was housed in a 60 foot diameter pit sunk into the top floor protected by an 11 inch thick roof and walls of reinforced concrete. The battery was designed to be self-supporting with accommodation for 81 men, a well-equipped hospital with an operating theatre and 38 beds, a communications centre, two water reservoirs and with magazines on the



German 16 inch gun

bottom floor. It was also air conditioned and gas-proof.

In 1944 in order to take Boulogne, Montgomery considered it essential to capture the cross-Channel guns despite their being heavily defended. Lindemann Battery had anti-tank ditches, perimeter barbed wire, seven foot high steel barriers, minefields, 18 machine gun sites and nine light anti-aircraft guns; every casemate was surrounded by an electrified fence as well as gun emplacements. To confuse attackers, there was also a dummy anti-aircraft site outside the perimeter. The defenders were determined - inscribed on the wall of Lindemann Battery were the words, 'Wir kämpfen bis zur letzten granate' - We will fight to the last round.

On 20 September 1944 the allies dropped 5,600 high explosive bombs on the battery, 23 of which hit the gun emplacements including each gun pit yet all three survived due to the excellent construction. An article published in the 1980 edition of *After*

the Battle magazine stated that the battery remained much as it was after the battle for its capture by the Canadians. The site and surrounding area was littered with bomb and shell craters, but with access unrestricted there was still much to explore. There were three well-weathered casemates - one named 'Anton' had been used as a rubbish tip. The surface of 'Bruno' had been badly shattered from a demolition charge fired on its roof after capture, but the underground works were in a reasonable state. 'Caesar' was the name of the third.

The capture of the cross-Channel guns in September 1944 ended four years of bombarding first British shipping in an attempt to dominate the Dover Strait which was an essential prerequisite for the invasion of Britain; later, with no invasion the guns were concentrated on shelling the Dover gun batteries and the deliberate shelling of coastal towns. With their capture imminent and with orders to exhaust their stocks of ammunition, in September 1944 alone

German guns destroyed 239 houses and damaged 1936 others in Dover and elsewhere - over half of the four years of shelling damage.

What you see today on Dover seafront is the painted German 'score sheet' on a piece of armoured plating from Lindemann's Caesar turret, which was presented to the town of Dover by the Calais branch of the British Legion to commemorate the capture of the batteries by the gallant Canadians, ending the terrible shelling of Dover.



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