

The Lindemann Monument

Peter (Jim) Green

On Dover Sea Front, behind a transparent panel set in concrete, is a large rectangular piece of metal known as the Lindemann Monument. Painted on it is an eagle carrying a projectile, flanked by the words 'Es flogen gegen Engeland' and above two lines of winged and numbered shells, each with a date over. How many people, I wonder, have just walked past without pausing to read the inscription below?

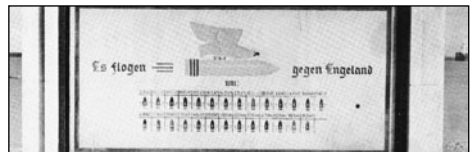
The piece of metal, now rusting somewhat and with the inscriptions beginning to fade, is actually a section of armour plating from one of the German World War Two guns used to bombard Dover and the surrounding area, and the painting is a sort of 'score sheet' recording the number of shells fired on particular days. It was presented to the town of Dover by the Calais Branch of the British Legion in 1954 as a memento of the bombardment. This commenced on the 12th of August 1940, a couple of months after the first enemy bomb fell on the town, and lasted until the 26th of September 1944, during which time 216 civilians were killed, with many more injured, and 957 premises completely destroyed, with 2194 severely damaged.

The armour plating on display came from the Caesar Casement, one of three guns in the Lindemann Battery, situated at Sangatte on the French coast, just west of Calais. Made by Krupp, they were the largest calibre of seventy-three long range heavy guns. Situated in the Pas de Calais region, they were capable of firing their 406mm shells up to a distance of some thirty-five miles across the Channel. The shells each weighed up to 1,323 pounds. The Lindemann Battery, incidentally, was named after the famous Kapitan Lindemann of the battleship Bismarck. The guns were operated by the German Naval Coast Battalion rather than by the army.

Following the Normandy Invasion (D-Day) when it became obvious that the German guns would soon be captured, the crews were instructed to use up all their ammunition, so Dover suffered an intense bombardment from the early days of September 1944, shells falling on just about every day until the guns were captured by the North Shore Regiment of the Canadian Army. During this period 239 dwellings were destroyed and 1,936 damaged. On the 13th of September, a shell fell on Dover Priory railway station, killing several people, including my grandmother who had just returned from visiting her husband in London to where, as a Customs Officer, he had been relocated.

Being only two at the time, I can recall very little of it all. I remember the Anderson shelter buried at the end of the garden and I remember seeing my grandmother once. In later years she seemed similar to the granny in the Giles Cartoons. Strangely, I remember the old gas holder in Union (now Coombe Valley) Road before an enemy parachute mine destroyed it, which, I think, was in 1943. I can't remember the explosion, only the mess it caused when the plaster fell down from the ceiling in my parents' bedroom.

Now, 2024 will be the 80th year since the shelling of Dover finished. I hope that we don't forget it and that it will be commemorated in some form or another, and that the Lindemann Monument will receive some loving care and attention before it is too late for it to be restored.



The Lindemann Monument, Dover