Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy

Appendix 1: Theme 5c Defence – Napoleonic

PROJECT:Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage StrategyDOCUMENT NAME:Theme 5c: Defence Heritage - Napoleonic

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V01	INTERNAL DRAFT	B Found	13/10/16
Comments – First draft of text. No illustrations. Needs current activities added			
and opportunities updated.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V02	RETURNED DRAFT	D Whittington	16.11.18
Update back from FHDC			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V03	CONSULTATION DRAFT	F Clark	03.12.18
Comments – Check through and title page inserted.			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V04			

Version	Status	Prepared by	Date
V05			

5c Defence Heritage – Napoleonic

1 Summary

Folkestone & Hythe District contains an exceptionally significant collection of Napoleonic period fortifications. Notable works of this period include the great programme of Martello building, construction of the Grand Redoubt at Dymchurch and the cutting of the Royal Military Canal. The collection of Napoleonic period defences in the district form a group of sites of outstanding importance.

2 Overview

2.1 Background

The French Revolution of 1789 and the deposition of Louis XVI of France sent shockwaves across the whole of Europe and ultimately saw war spread across Europe and the overseas colonies. Throughout this period Britain was engaged almost continuously in wars with France, ending ultimately with the defeat of Napoleon. The outbreak of the Revolutionary Wars (1793-1802) and subsequent Napoleonic Wars (1803 – 1815) saw an extensive system of new defences built in stages across the district.

At the start of this period Britain was primarily a maritime nation, with only a small standing army. Naval supremacy was Britain's traditional first line of defence; by controlling the channel and blockading the French fleet in its ports the Admiralty was confident that it could protect Britain from invasion. In Europe however, France's land armies were unstoppable, fighting with revolutionary zeal and making use of new tactics. French military successes on the continent, combined with failed invasion attempts on Ireland in 1796 and 1798 led to a period of invasion fears and ultimately to a massive programme of new defensive works along Britain's coast. The favourable landing beaches of the Kent Coast and in particular the Romney Marsh embayment and Dungeness became the focus for a new system of strategic defence.

The first phase of 'Napoleonic period' defences constructed in the district comprised a series of small coastal batteries and gun platforms supported by earthwork redoubts that were rapidly erected in the early years of the Revolutionary Wars. Subsequently during the Napoleonic War a more comprehensive system of layered defence was built, including a string of Martello Towers, redoubt and the Royal Military Canal.

Name	Description	Survival
Dungeness	A group of four coastal	Lade Fort (Dungeness
Bastion	batteries and an earthwork	Battery No 2) survives
	redoubt constructed in 1798	relatively intact and is a
	during the Revolutionary Wars	Scheduled Monument. The
	to protect the anchorage off	interior of the Fort is
	Dungeness. An additional	occupied by a number of
	battery was located further	private dwellings. Battery No

2.2 Key Components

Coastal Batteries at Hythe	along the coast at Lydd also constructed in 1798. A group of three coastal batteries located on the beach at Hythe along with a fourth on higher ground at Saltwood Heights constructed in 1798 during the Revolutionary Wars.	1 is a ruin, and the other batteries have been totally lost. The earthwork redoubt survives, again with private dwellings in its interior. No surviving remains are known of Saltwood Heights Battery. Fort Twiss has been demolished and replaced by Housing. Some buried remains of Fort Sutherland survive close to Martello 24. Fort Moncrief is lost, but some remains may survive beneath the sea wall in front of the Hythe Ranges.
Shorncliffe Redoubt and Battery	A substantial earthwork redoubt located on the high ground at Shorncliffe Heights and built in 1794. Below the redoubt closer to the coast an artillery battery was added in 1798 and later incorporated into the defences at the eastern end of the Royal Military Canal.	Shorncliffe Redoubt is a Scheduled Monument. Substantial sections of the earthwork redoubt survives on its south and eastern sides, but the north-eastern quadrant has been largely levelled. It is uncertain what, if anything, survives of the Revolutionary Wars period battery. The battery wall associated with the defence of the eastern end of the Royal Military Canal survives and is a Scheduled Monument.
Batteries at Folkestone	An existing battery at the Bayle in Folkestone was refortified, whilst a new work was constructed at East Wear Bay in 1798.	The battery at East Wear Bay is believed to have been lost to the sea. It is uncertain what, if anything, survives of the Revolutionary Wars period works at Bayle Battery.
Matello Towers 1-9	Part of a chain of Martello Towers built along the coast of Kent and Sussex between 1805 and 1808. Towers 1-9 are built along the high ground between Copt Point and Shorncliffe.	All nine towers survive and is the most intact section of Martello Towers on the Kent Coast. All bar Towers 2 & 8 are Scheduled Monuments. Towers 1, 2 and 6-9 are all Grade II Listed. Towers 1, 2 and 8 have been converted to residential use, whilst Tower 3 is used for storage, but had previously been open

		as a visitor centre.
Sandgate Castle Martello	Sandgate Castle was originally built during the reign of Herny VIII, but was altered in 1805 to form coastal battery, with its central tower being converted into a quasi Martello Tower. Part of a chain of Martello	Sandgate Castle survives as a ruin and is a Scheduled Monument and Grade I Listed Building. The castle is privately owned. Towers 10-12 were
Towers 10- 21	Towers built along the coast of Kent and Sussex between 1805 and 1808. Towers 10-21 were built to protect the shingle beaches of the Hythe Embayment, which were identified as being a target for landing any invasion force.	demolished in the nineteenth century, but some below ground archaeological remains might survive. Tower 13 has been converted to a private dwelling. Towers 14 & 15 are largely complete and in good condition; they are located within the Hythe Ranges 'danger area'. They are the only towers to survive in something like their original open beach setting. Both are Listed at Grade II and are Scheduled Monuments. Towers 16-18 have been lost to the sea, but some buried remains may survive under the shingle foreshore. Tower 19 is Grade II Listed but is in ruins, it is also located within the Hythe ranges 'danger area'. As with 16-18 Towers 20 & 21 have been lost to the sea with no above ground remains surviving.
Dymchurch Redoubt	Dymchurch Redoubt was built between 1804 and 1812 to support the chain of Martello Towers that stretched along the low-lying coast between Hythe and Rye. The redoubt provided troop accommodation and acted as a command and supply depot for the individual towers. It was also provided with its own guns, providing for 360 degree fire. The redoubt is circular in form; built of brick and granite	Dymchurch Redoubt survives and remains in military ownership. It is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

	I	
	it comprises a central parade	
	ground enclosed by	
	bombproof magazines and	
	barracks upon which the gun	
	emplacements were situated.	
	It is encircled by a dry moat.	
Martello	Part of a chain of Martello	Tower 22 was removed in the
Towers 22-	Towers built along the coast of	1950s for road
27	Kent and Sussex between	improvements, but below
21	1805 and 1808. Towers 22-27	ground remains may survive.
	were built in pairs to protect	Tower 23 survives and is
	key sluices draining Romney	Grade II Listed. It has been
	Marsh. Nos 22 & 23 protected	converted to a private
	the Wallop Sluice; 24 & 25 the	residence. Tower 24 is a
	Marshland Sluice; and 26 & 27	Scheduled Monument and is
	the Clobsden Gut Sluice.	Grade II Listed. It has been
		restored and is under English
		Heritage guardianship. It is
		open by appointment only.
		Tower 25 survives and is a
		Grade II Listed Building.
		Towers 26 & 27 have been
		lost to the sea and no above
		ground remains survive.
Royal	The Royal Military Canal was	The Royal Military Canal
Military	constructed between 1804	survives as an impressive
Canal	and 1810 and ran from	landscape feature. It is a
Ganai	Seabrook (Hythe) to Cliff End	Scheduled Monument and is
	near Winchelsea. The Canal is	
		designated in sections: Royal
	built in two sections, with the	Military Canal Seabrook
	two excavated sections being	Lodge Bridge to Seabrook
	linked by the Rivers Rother	Sluice; Royal Military Canal
	and Brede. The canal was	Twiss Road Bridge to
	built as a linear defensive	Seabrook Lodge Bridge;
	feature in order to isolate	Royal Military Canal Town
	Romney March from the high	Bridge to Twiss Road Bridge;
	ground to the rear. It was	Royal Military Canal
	cleverly built in a series of	Scanlon's Bridge to Town
	angled sections, each	Bridge; Royal Military Canal
	terminating in a flank with	West Hythe Bridge to
	space for a gun, thus allowing	Scanlon's Bridge; Royal
	enfilading fire along the length	Military Canal West Hythe
	of the canal. To the rear	Dam to West Hythe Bridge;
	(landward) side of the canal	Royal Military Canal
	was an earthen parapet	Honeypot Cottage to West
	behind which troops could be	
		Hythe Dam (all of which are
	stationed along with a military	wholly in the district); and
	road allowing for the rapid	Royal Military Canal Gigger's
	movement of troops. At the far eastern end of the canal	Green Bridge to Honeypot Cottage (which extends into

Shorncliffe Battery was rebuilt to protect the sluices and the drawbridge over the Sandgate Road. The full length of the	Ashford Borough).
canal is some 28 miles (22 of which were dug) of which around 7 miles are in the district.	

Coastal Batteries, redoubts and gun platforms

In the late 1790s a new style of coastal battery emerged that made use of the newly invented timber traversing gun platform. This technological breakthrough consisted of a raised wooden carriage that could be traversed along a curved metal rail. The introduction of this new type of gun carriage meant that guns could be more rapidly brought to bear on any enemy target and also meant that fewer guns could be used to control a stretch of coast. The traversing gun carriage would be the principal means of mounting guns in forts for nearly a century.

At Dungeness four small coastal batteries were constructed in 1798 so as to protect the offshore anchorage here; two to the west of Dungeness Point and two to the east. These batteries were supported by a redoubt at the point itself, also built in 1798 – together these defences were known as the Dungeness Bastion. The batteries featured a series of guns arranged in a faceted arc to the seaward side, with a defensible loopholed wall to the rear. Lade Fort (Dungeness Battery No 2) survives and is a Scheduled Monument. There are also surviving ruins of No 1 Battery, but the other two have been entirely lost to the sea. Dungeness Redoubt itself comprised an octagonal earthwork about 215m in diameter with guns erected upon its ramparts. The raised earthen ramparts of the redoubt survive. A further battery is recorded a short distance to the west within what is now the Lydd Ranges. No remains of this battery, which was again constructed in 1798, are known to survive.

Further along the coast further batteries were thrown up in 1798 at Hythe (three along the coast and a fourth at Saltwood Heights), whilst an existing seventeenth century gun platform at Hythe was also re-armed. To the east of Hythe further batteries were added at Shorncliffe close to what would later be the eastern end of the Royal Military Canal. The battery at Shorncliffe was supported by a redoubt, constructed in 1794 on the high-ground overlooking the coast. Shorncliffe Redoubt is a rare survival of an early earthwork field fortification of this period and is designated as a Scheduled Monument. It originally comprised a square rampart surrounded by a ditch, but much of the north rampart has been subsequently levelled and the ditch partly infilled. An existing battery at the Bayle in Folkestone was refortified, whilst a further (now lost) battery was constructed at East Wear Bay also in 1798.

The Martello System

The Treaty of Amiens (1802) brought a brief, but uneasy period of peace between Britain and France. This however proved to be short-lived; indeed it was more a period of 'armed respite' during which both sides prepared for renewed war. In 1803 the inevitable happened and hostilities were renewed, with Britain now increasingly isolated and vulnerable from invasion. France now under the control of the Emperor Napoleon began amassing an invasion force prompting Britain to set about the largest programme of home defence then ever seen. Napoleon noted:

All my thoughts are directed towards England. I want only for a favourable wind to plant the Imperial Eagle on the Tower of London

The low-lying beaches of the south and east coasts were thought to be particularly vulnerable to invasion and a new system of defences were built in the district to defend the vulnerable invasion beaches between Folkestone and Dungeness. Key to the defence of this 20 mile (32km) stretch of coastline was the construction of a chain of Martello Towers.

The south coast Martello Towers of Kent and Sussex were built between 1805 and 1808, from Copt Point (Folkestone) to Seaford (East Sussex), with 27 built along the coast in the district. A further east coast system of towers was also built between Clacton-on-Sea (Essex) to Slaughden (Suffolk). Others were built in Ireland, Scotland and across the colonies. The south coast towers were elliptical in plan; looking broadly like an upturned pot they featured a single gun mounted behind a parapet on the tower's roof. The gun was on a centrally pivoted traversing platform, giving each tower a 360degree field of fire. The interior of the towers was constructed over three floors, with a massive central pillar running up from the base of the tower to support the gun on the roof. The basement contained a cistern to store water, the ground floor the magazine and the upper (first) floor provided barracks accommodation. Entry to the towers was at first floor level, either by retractable ladder, or where encircled by a moat (such as the towers between The Leas and Shorncliffe) via a drawbridge. The towers were brick-built and rendered externally. Of the 27 towers originally built in the district 16 survive, some as ruins, some restored and some subsequently converted to residential use.

Within the district the towers included a group of nine that stretched from Copt Point at Folkestone, west to Shorncliffe; this group survives intact. At Sandgate the existing Henrician castle was modified into a pseudo Martello Tower. West from Hythe a series of 12 towers protected the embayment along the shoreline to the Grand Redoubt at Dymchurch.

Dymchurch Redoubt was built to support the chain of Martello Towers that stretched along the low-lying coast between Hythe and Rye. The redoubt provided troop accommodation and acted as a command and supply depot for the individual towers. It was also provided with its own guns, providing for 360-degree fire and was positioned specifically adjacent to the sluices which were key to the drainage of Romney Marsh. The redoubt is circular in form; built of brick and granite it comprises a central parade ground enclosed by bombproof magazines and barracks upon which the gun emplacements were situated. It is encircled by a dry moat and originally accessed by a retractable bridge. The redoubt remains in military use and is a Scheduled Monument. It is one of three similar redoubts constructed at this time

To the west of the redoubt were a further six towers built along the beachfront. These were built in three paired groups, with each pair guarding key sluices where the Romney Marsh drainage system emptied into the sea.

The Royal Military Canal

The Royal Military Canal was constructed from 1804 around the back of the Romney Marsh and provided a third line of defence (along with Naval control of the Channel and the Coastal Battery and Tower system). Prior to its construction the prevailing thought was that the Romney Marsh could be quickly flooded and the resulting flooded morass, ditches and sewers presenting an impassable obstacle for any invading force. In reality, such a proposition was probably unworkable; not only would it need significant forewarning, but the potential harm that would result from any false alarm would be unpalatable, hugely embarrassing and expensive.

The canal, which was the idea of Lt. Col. Brown would allow for the separation of any invading troops landed on the coast from the district's interior without the need for uncontrolled flooding of the marsh. The canal as built ran for 28 miles from Seabrook near Folkestone to Cliff End near Hastings. It is third longest defensive monument in the country after Hadrian's Wall and Offa's Dyke and is the only military canal built in the country.

The Royal Military Canal is constructed in two sections, the longest runs from Seabrook (Shorncliffe) and ends at Iden Lock near Rye; the second shorter section runs from Winchelsea to the coast at Cliff End. The two excavated sections are linked by the Rivers Rother and Brede. Within the district it largely follows the ancient shoreline below the Hythe escarpment. Beyond the district boundary it continues past the villages of Bilsington, Ruckinge, Hamstreet, Warehorne and Appledore. From Appledore it passes across the mouth of the High Weald valley to Ebony and across the Rother valley to Iden Lock. From here it follows the river Rother to Rye passing below the escarpment of the High Weald. From Rye the defensive line follows the River Brede to Winchelsea before heading south-west to the coast at Cliff End.

The man-made defences consisted not only of the canal itself, but also an adjacent embankment made from the up-cast material from the ditch. The embankment formed a parapet on the landward side, behind which troops could be positioned, alongside the parapet there was a military road that allowed for the rapid movement of troops along the canal's length. To the seaward side there was a further towpath. As part of the original design the canal featured a back and a front balancing drain. The canal was cleverly designed, being built in a series of angled sections, each terminating in a flank with space for a gun, thus allowing enfilading fire along the length of the canal, if the enemy attempted to cross it.

Guardhouses – known as Station Houses – were located at major bridge crossings along the canal, numbered numerically from the Seabrook (eastern

end of the canal). In the district there were guardhouses at Seabrook Sluice (1), Scanlon's Bridge (2), West Hythe Bridge (3) and Aldergate (Eldergate) Bridge (4), but none now survive other than potentially as buried archaeological remains.

At the eastern end of the canal Shorncliffe Battery was rebuilt to protect the sluices and the drawbridge over the Sandgate Road at Seabrook. A substantial section of the retaining battery wall survives and is designated as a Scheduled Monument, but much of the battery interior has been in-filled with modern housing.

The first turf was cut in 1804 and the canal was built using a mixture of military and civilian labour. It was estimated that it would be completed by June 1805 and was to cost £200,000. In fact, it wasn't until April 1809 that the canal was actually completed), although the defensive canons were not in position until 1812 and cost £234,310 (a huge amount at the time).

By the time the canal was complete the threat of invasion from Napoleonic France was long since passed. In order to recoup some of the costs of construction, the government opened it up for navigation. Originally used for the transport of good it was also, from 1810, opened to the public with a regular barge service running between Hythe and Rye. The canal also played an important role in the draining and management of water levels on Romney Marsh.

3 Statement of Significance

3.1 Significance

The district is home to one of the finest systems of Napoleonic period defences in the country. As a group they excellently illustrate the British response to the very real threat of invasion that was ever present up until Nelson's victory at Trafalgar and the formation of the Third Coalition (comprising Britain, Russia, Austria and Naples) which focussed Napoleon's attentions back to mainland Europe. The fortifications also illustrate changes in military thinking and priorities, with a clear contrast between the lightweight batteries and earthwork redoubts of the Revolutionary Wars and the subsequent hardened defences erected during the Napoleonic Wars. The group of nine Martello Towers from Copt Point to Shorncliffe represent the most intact sequence, with all nine towers surviving, whilst at Hythe Beach the district possesses one of the very few groups of Towers to now survive in an open beach setting which is anything like that in which they were originally constructed. The Royal Military Canal is a unique defensive work, survives largely intact and is a major landscape feature cutting across the district. The defences are also associated with a number of important military engineers and political figures. As a group the Napoleonic period defences of the district are of outstanding significance.

3.2 Heritage Values

Evidential

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic period defences in the district have strong evidential value. The sites comprise a mix of buried archaeological evidence,

standing structures, buildings and earthworks, or in many cases a combination of all these elements. Archaeological and architectural investigation of these sites has the potential to reveal new evidence of how the sites functioned militaristically as well as how they were originally constructed. Such work, along with documentary research, may also reveal information that can help us understand how these fortifications were modified and re-used in the post-Napoleonic period. Archaeological evidence can also help, through the recovery of artefacts or environmental remains, understand the living conditions and social history of the fortifications. Prospecting through the use of aerial survey, map regression, Lidar imagery and geophysical survey may help identify lost fortifications or elements of fortification that have later been removed.

Historical

The Napoleonic defensive positions along the coast help to illustrate the military thinking of the time, that ultimately saw the development of a strategic layered system of defence designed to protect key places and points of weakness that might be targeted by any invading force. The scale and number of fortifications constructed in the District clearly illustrates how very real the threat of invasion by Napoleonic France was, particularly in the period 1803 to 1805. The fortifications also demonstrate a change in military thinking from the time of the Revolutionary Wars, when the main focus was the construction of relatively lightweight batteries, primarily for coastal defence, to the Napoleonic period when hardened fortifications designed to defend against an enemy landing force were constructed. The fortifications constructed in the district are also associated with a number of important military and political figures of the time, including the Duke of York and William Pitt the Prime Minister.

Aesthetic

The aesthetic values of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period fortifications are varied. They were not designed with aesthetics in mind, but nevertheless have direct associations with the places that they were designed to defend, their location being closely linked to their landscape setting. Although the defences were not consciously designed to be pleasing to the eye, some have now taken on an attractive quality. Martello Towers 14 & 15 at Hythe for example form an appealing group situated as they are on an open shingle beach, giving them a powerful and dramatic quality. The Royal Military Canal now forms a tranquil and attractive waterway, its aesthetic quality being drawn in part from the softening and naturalising of the military work. This however introduces potential for management conflict, as invading vegetation may be valued for its biodiversity and natural beauty but can be harmful to understanding the original military function of a place. From the air however, the canal can still be appreciated as a dramatic and striking landscape feature, with its distinctive stepped trace, being particularly noticeable.

Communal

As with their aesthetic qualities, the communal value of the fortifications is mixed. They have the potential to contribute to a sense of national identity, being a reminder of the British victory over the forces of Napoleon. They also act as a reminder of how very real the threat of invasion was, particularly in the early years of the Napoleonic War. Nowadays some of the fortifications are valued locally for other reasons, such as the Royal Military Canal, which is enjoyed as a place for leisure and recreation, attracting pursuits such as fishing, cycling, walking and canoeing.

4 Vulnerabilities

A number of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period defences of the district are protected through designation (either as Scheduled Monuments of Listed Buildings). Whilst this provides a level of protection this does not mean that such sites are not vulnerable to change, either to their fabric or their setting. Indeed, despite being designated a number of sites are included on the current Historic England Heritage at Risk register.

In all cases the fortification works were built with a specific military purpose in mind. This brings with it particular challenges for finding suitable and sustainable new uses for the sites. Where sites do not have a long-term use they are vulnerable to neglect, decay and vandalism which could, without long-term maintenance programmes, ultimately lead to serious and potentially irreversible harm to the fabric of these places. However, any new use that is found for these sites has to be appropriate and sensitive to the significance of the place. For example, a number of Martello Towers have been converted for residential use. Whilst this does help to ensure the future maintenance of the towers a number of conversions have been undertaken that might now be considered to be less than sympathetic.

It is not just the physical fabric of these sites that is vulnerable to change, but also their setting. As military structures the defensive sites considered in this theme were carefully and deliberately sited within the landscape. These fortifications would have had specific important views, lines of sight and fields of fire. Some, such as the chain of Martello Towers were designed to function as a group, be inter-visible and overlap and co-operate with their neighbour. In the case of the towers to the west of Dungeness Redoubt they were specifically located adjacent to the main sluices draining the Romney Marsh for their protection. The setting of these defensive sites therefore makes a special contribution to their significance. In some instances, this setting has already been compromised by unsympathetic modern development, in other cases the setting of the defensive sites survives relatively intact. Development within the setting of a defensive site may diminish the ability of someone to appreciate the defensive significance of a site.

The position of many of the defensive sites considered above is coastal. This brings its own particular challenges and vulnerabilities. For example, sites located on an open beach setting might be vulnerable to coastal erosion and it is worth noting that a number of the Martello Towers between Hythe and Dymchurch have already been lost to the sea. Even when not vulnerable to direct erosion the harsh maritime climate can cause its own maintenance issues and cause more gradual damage.

5 **Opportunities**

Folkestone & Hythe District contains an exceptional collection of 'Napoleonic' period defences. These form part of a patchwork of fortification remains of multiple periods from across the District that span nearly 2000 years. Collectively they have the potential to make a significant contribution to the social, cultural and economic well-being of the district. Some sites are already being re-purposed, with the Royal Military Canal for example becoming a focus for outdoor leisure pursuits. Other sites are hidden away, underappreciated and under-valued and opportunities should be sought to increase local and wider awareness of these sites, so their potential benefits can be realised.

Together the fortifications have the potential to illustrate a powerful story of the rise and fall of Revolutionary and Napoleonic France and the very real threat that was felt in this country. Thought should be given to how the various disparate sites could be linked together to form a more coherent group, so that their educational and tourist value can be maximised. There are opportunities to draw on existing leisure uses, through the creation of longer distance trails for walkers and cyclists that help link sites together.

As a group the sites have varied levels of public access, but there is currently no specific focus or key site that could act as a 'hub' linking the various sites together. If realised, the aspirations of the Shorncliffe Trust for a visitor centre at the redoubt could potentially provide such a focus, perhaps utilising those buildings that are to be retained. Where sites are currently managed for public enjoyment opportunity should be sought to maximise the value that these sites bring through enhancement, better interpretation and coherent marketing.

A priority must be to find a sustainable future for the derelict Martello Towers currently identified on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register so that, ultimately, these can be removed permanently from it. Any future use of the towers however must be appropriate to their significance, should preferably retain some form of public access and realise the potential for illustrating the rich history of the district's Napoleonic period invasion coast.

6 Current Activities

- The Shorncliffe Trust Fundraising, organisation and facilitation of many events, commemorations and activities. For example, 'Light in the Darkest Hour' is an annual commemoration service at the Shorncliffe Military Cemetery to remember those who were lost in the Battle of the Somme. Heritage tours?
- Shepway HEART Forum Involvement in a number of projects working together with a number of groups/initiatives/organisations -Belgium Day 2018, Footprints, Shorncliffe Trust Heritage Tours.
- Dymchurch Martello Tower (No. 24) open to the public at specified times. Managed by English Heritage.

7 Sources Used and Further Information

Frontline Kent

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