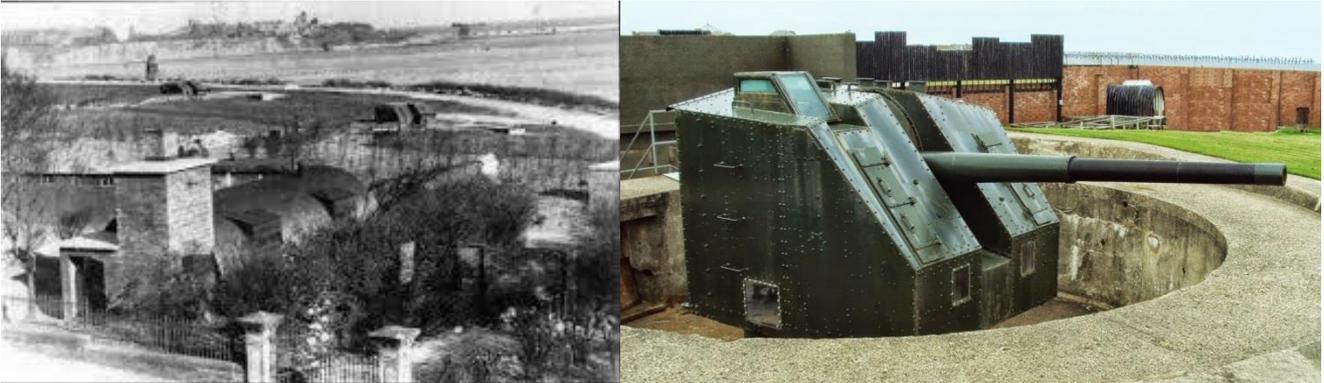




## BOLDON CAMP HERITAGE GROUP

### The Lawe (Park) Battery – The Lawe Top, South Shields



A period photograph of “The Lawe (Park) Battery and a preserved 5.25 inch Coastal/Air Defence Gun at the Heugh Battery, Hartlepool

If you look at an aerial image of North Marine Park in South Shields, to the north end of the park, you will see a piece of land, bordered by pathways, in the shape of a semicircle. This area of land is what is known as “The Lawe” or more locally as “The Lawe Top”. An elevated piece of land, providing a great vantage point with a clear view over the North and South Piers at the mouth of the River Tyne and out to the far horizon of the North Sea.

The importance of this geographical piece of land, and the surrounding areas, had not gone unnoticed, with both sea navigational aids and a Roman fort having been built here in the past.

As the grip of WW2 strengthened on the UK, and measures were taken to shore up home defences, in 1940, “The Lawe (Park) Battery” was built as an emergency gun location, equipped with two 6 inch breach loading anti-aircraft guns, and manned by the Royal Marines. In 1941 these guns were replaced with two 6 inch Mk XI/VI guns, which had been relocated from Frenchman’s Bay Battery to the south of Trow Rocks. In March 1941 the Royal Marines were replaced by 348 Coast Battery of the 508 (Tynemouth) Coast Regiment, Royal Artillery (TA).

Further re-armament of the battery took place from April-July 1943, when three 5.25-inch Mk 1B dual purpose anti-aircraft/coastal defence guns which were radar controlled, and capable of firing between 7 and 10 rounds per minute, with a horizontal range of 24,700m were installed at the battery. These new guns were the most modern British guns available. They were radar controlled, and consequently, extremely effective. The complexity and extensive works necessary for the new gun emplacements made them very expensive to install. Due to the expense and the Royal Navy’s demand for this type of gun with the same calibre, they were only emplaced at the most important locations.

Despite their value, the guns were downgraded to non-operational by 1945 and with the abandonment of coastal defence, the battery was handed over to Anti-Aircraft Command in 1951 and was eventually decommissioned, with the guns being disposed of by the Ministry of Defence and the site dismantled in 1956. After which, the land was handed back to South Shields Corporation and the area landscaped to what it resembles today.

The Lawe (Park) Anti-Aircraft / Coastal Battery had served as a strategic and important defence for the River Tyne with its strategic industrial activities, ship building and repair operations throughout World War Two.

After very warm weather, when the grass is not so lush and green, from up above, the outline of the old battery gun emplacements, service roads and pathways are sometimes visible under the scorched grass. An ever-present reminder, in the summer at least, of that small piece of land on which family's picnic and children play, which helped to protect Tyneside during World War Two.

Article by Andrew Scott

### **Sources**

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