

Danish Archaeologists Uncover Forgotten German World War I Fortification

The forgotten story of a German fortified line, *Fortification North*, which runs across Southern Jutland in Denmark, will now be brought to life by the Danish Agency for Culture through preservation efforts for the abandoned bunkers and gun batteries that were not blown to bits and removed after the end of World War I. Excavations document that the fortified line from the First World War is the best preserved in the world.

Fortification North was built in the period from 1916-18 and consisted of around 900 bunkers, 40 artillery batteries and defensive lines with trenches and barbed wire. *Fortification North* was placed across what at that time was German Northern Schleswig and was the strongest fortification of its sort in Europe. The military facility stretches over 50 kilometres and was built in an area of Denmark that was lost to Germany in the war of 1864.

The fortification was built by the Imperial German Army in 1916-18, using military convicts and German criminals taken from prisons to do the hard labour. The fortification was built to withstand an attack from at least 100,000 Englishmen and send them back into the ocean near Esbjerg.

Best preserved in the world

Fortunately, *Fortification North* was never used; but, after the war, Denmark saw the defensive works as a threat because they could be manned quickly by an enemy – the Germans – who would then be difficult to dislodge. Therefore, the Danish army blew the facility up in the years following World War I and removed much of it. Which is to say – they tried to carry out a systematic demolition, but some of the bunkers made it through because they were overlooked and others were located too close to farms and residences to be blown up responsibly. This means that the fortified line from World War I is the best preserved in the world.

For this reason and because the German military facility tells an important story in European history and the history of Southern Jutland during its German period, the Danish Agency for Culture has begun the process of preserving *Fortification North*, so this history is never forgotten.

Press images and maps are available. Please email: pkp@kulturstyrelsen.dk

Contact:

Peter Kronsted, The Danish Agency for Culture, pkp@kulturstyrelsen.dk, +45 2278 9955