



## 1947: the Monument du Commando

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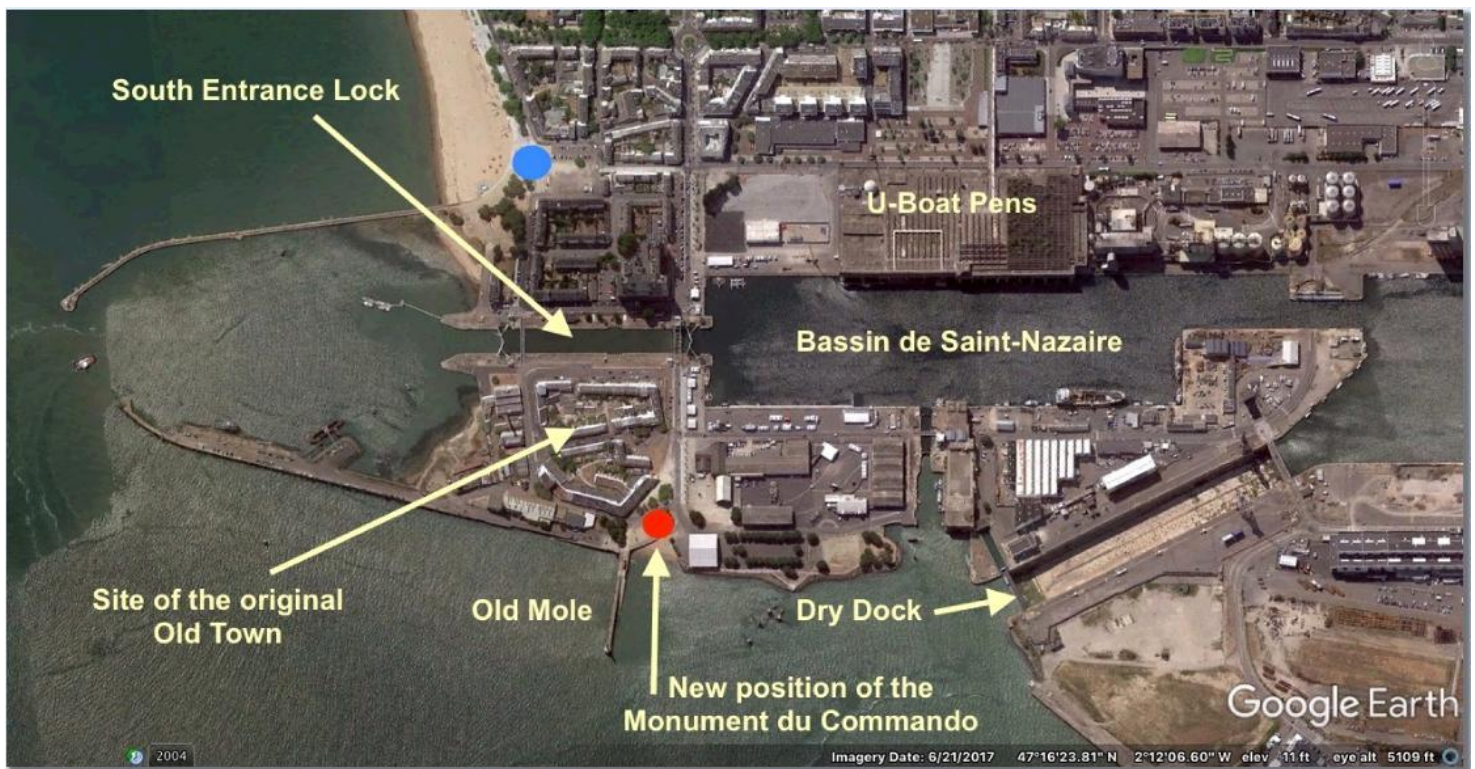
The Monument du Commando in its new location,  
just prior to the 75th Commemoration of Operation Chariot.

The maintenance of close ties with the town and people of Saint-Nazaire was a founding principle of the Society; and right from the first Committee meeting the placing of a simple plaque somewhere in the dock area had been a subject of much discussion. When the French

authorities were approached, they were most enthusiastic: in fact they designed the Memorial, chose a site close to the base of the west jetty of the Avant Port (blue dot) and organised an inaugural reception, with some 150 Charioteers sailing to Saint-Nazaire from Portland, on board the cruiser HMS Sirius.

As reported in the Society's fourth newsletter, the unveiling was carried out on August 2nd, by none other than the Premier of France, M. Ramadier, who placed the raid in its true historical perspective by stating that - 'You were the first to bring us hope'.

Of course that was a very long time ago and, in the intervening years the town of Saint-Nazaire has seen much expansion and modernisation, the most recent stages of which have prompted the relocation of the Monument du Commando to a new site at the base of the Old Mole. Here it now stands, approximately on the site of the Old Pilotage: but, sadly, without the close and evocative presence of HMS Campbeltown's forward gun.



The redevelopment of the original Monument site (blue dot) - shared by HMS Campbeltown's forward gun and a memorial to the huge losses suffered when the liner Lancastria was sunk whilst evacuating thousands of service and civilian personnel in June 1940 - is designed to make best use of its prime seafront location. The new site (red dot) places the Monument at the heart of the 1942 Commando operating area, at the seaward end of the deadly Place de la Vieille Ville, close to the Old Mole landing slip, and only a matter of metres from the Commandos' holding position where survivors assembled prior to their attempted breakout. As you stand by the Monument today and look out along the line of the Mole, picture the scene as it was then; the searchlights, the tracer, and above all the flames and smoke emanating from the wreckage of the brave 'little ships' which had hoped to put their Commandos ashore here.