

The Atlantic Wall in Guernsey

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On this my first visit to Guernsey, armed with the book "A guide to German Fortifications in Guernsey" BY Ernie Gavey, I wanted to get a better than average impression of the Atlantic wall; in this I succeeded.

Don't forget to take with you the other book about the Channel Islands; "Le Mur de l'Atlantique dans les îles Anglo-Normandes" BY Jean-Bernhard Wahl. It is complementary to the first.

Guernsey is smaller than Jersey and has A triangular shape. The south being the base of the triangle, has steep cliffs. The north is flat. The largest, western side is largely indented with bays. Each of them has its own character. On the east side there is the capital, St Peter Port and some other villages.

Something which attracts your attention immediately is that the island is full of homes and greenhouses. When we compared Guernsey with Jersey we had the impression that the island has retained its purity, not spoiled by mass tourism. Examples? Free parking everywhere !!! Except for St Peter Port. Another quaint thing. Along the road you see small cupboards with baskets or bags with strawberries, tomatos, books or other things, together with a small cash-box. A note tells you that you have to put a predefined amount into the cash-box to have your item. In Belgium this would unimaginable. The cash-box would have been stolen, together with your strawberries or you would find them lying around, smashed. Even your cupboard would be vandalised.

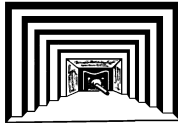
You probably know that the Channel Islands were the only parts of British territory to be occupied by the Germans. Consisting of the islands of Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark and Herm, the islands are situated close to the French coasts of Normandy and Brittany off St Malo.

The fact that the Germans saw the islands as good propaganda value meant that many bunkers were built along their coastlines. They had time, concrete, steel and manpower a plenty to busy themselves with this task. Unfortunately, the manpower employed were prisoners who had to work under extremely bad conditions.

This is the organisational chart of the German units.

7 AOK

- (Le Mans)
LXXXIV
- (St Lo)
 - 319. ID
- (St Martin)
 - 582. IR
- (Kernwerk, St Anastase, Jersey)
 - 583. IR
- (St Andrew)
 - 584. IR
- (St Peter Port)



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319. AR
(Kernwerk, St Anastase, Jersey)

604. MAA
(St Martin)

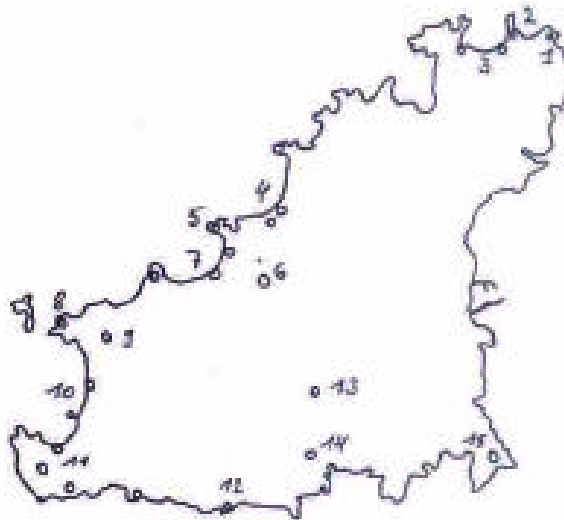
1265. HKAR
(St Martin)

292. LW FlaK Reg (St
Martin)

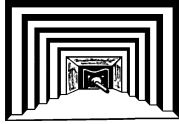
After the war, our biggest enemies, the scrap hunters, swooped like hawks on the *Sechschartenturmen* and guns so that almost nothing remained. Fortunately, all the bunkers are still there. The **Channel Islands Occupation Society (CIOS)** who also have a branch on Guernsey, are taking care of them by restoring them. A lot of the bunkers are open to the public on certain days. Moreover the tourist department considers the bunkers as one of the curiosities of the island and has incorporated them into their sightseeing program.

Unfortunately on Guernsey there does not exist a map about the German occupation like the one on Jersey. I would advise that you buy an ordinary road map and first of all visit the German Occupation Museum. There you can mark the strongpoints and batteries on your map by copying the original German map on the wall.

Note also that there is an occupation museum on the island of Sark.



I want to start by describing the west side of the island. This area is indented with bays and between each bay, there is a headland. On each headland the Islanders built a fortress as defence against the French army of Napoleon. The Germans used these forts of course to incorporate their bunkers, which probably explains why I had the impression that there are more



bunkers here than on Jersey which has more steep cliffs but less bays. On the other hand the Jersey bunkers are more photogenic.

We start at the northern edge of the island.

1. *Stp Nebelhorn* at Fort Doyle

This old fort was built in 1816 and its armament consisted of 3 x 18 Pdr guns. It is pretty well preserved and can be visited for free. From here you have a nice view on the island Herm and the small isle Jethou. But what about concrete?? Actually there are two emplacements for a 2 cm FlaK; one in the fort on one of the old gun emplacements and the other one on an open emplacement outside the fort. Next to it there is a camouflaged garage with granite blocks. Seeing its low profile, I think it was meant for a PAK rather than for a searchlight. The main armament of the Stp was no doubt the 10.5 cm K 331 (f) gun in the casemate, pointing to the east.

2. *Marine Stp Großhugel* near Fort le Marchant

When you walk westwards you come to the next headland. There the German Navy strongpoint *Stp Großhugel* dominates the neighbourhood. With an emplacement for a Freya radar. The radar is protected by two Fl242 bunkers for a 2 cm FlaK. Nice.

On the headland itself stands the old fort *Fort Le Marchant*, also well preserved. It was built in 1816 and had 6 x 24 Pdr guns. Free to visit.

3. L'Ancrese Bay & Pembroke Bay

Classic situation. The bay's beach is covered by a PAK casemate on each side. 10.5 cm casemates stood more on the edges of headlands to cover the approach of the bay. In this case the 10.5 cm casemates are buried (*Stp Marschen*), but the PAK casemates remain. Both contained a 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t). The resistance nest at L'Ancrese Bay was called *WN Dohlenturm* and I found there a 631b special plan and an MG pillbox. The other side of the bay is called L'Ancrese bay and has an interesting 676 incorporated into one of the four anti-tank walls at Guernsey. This was *WN Golfwerk*.

At the golf area lies the Flak battery *Dolmen* for 8.8 cm guns, which I did not visit. More's the pity.

Don't forget to look at the typical Martello towers.

4. Cobo Bay & Saline Bay

This is a large rocky bay with two headlands, Les Grandes Rocques in the north and the headland of *Fort Hommet* in the south.

The headland Grand Rocques has, of course, an old fort that has been "rebuilt" by the Germans. This strongpoint was called *Stp Großfels*. The fort has 3 emplacements for a heavy MG and next to it there is a simple emplacement for a FlaK or field gun. A *Jäger* casemate for a 10.5 K 331 (f) gun points to the north, but the second one, pointing to the south is buried. (A German engineer with the name *Jäger* designed this model of casemate). In the corner of the bay lies a casemate for a 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t). Although this was a very strong Stp with a 633 (bunker for a 5 cm mortar), crew bunkers and search light bunker, nothing much remains except for what I described.

At Cobo, just beneath the hill, you find *WN Coboufer*. This is a small interesting WN with two PAK casemates for a PAK 36 with in the middle a casemate for a *Sechsschartenturm*. Nothing remains from the latter, but the hill remains. Behind the kiosk you see the roof of a crew bunker.



On top of the hill, *Le Guet* there is *WN Cobofels* with an observation post.

5. Fort Hommet

On the large headland between the small Albecq Bay and Vazon Bay stood the old fort Fort Hommet. The Germans fortified this headland to make a very strong strongpoint called *Stp Rotenstein*. Searchlight bunkers were built on both sides of the fort's tower. A bunker for a *Sechsschartenturm* stood at the end of the headland. Unfortunately the turret has been removed. In the middle of the headland you can still see with a little effort the roof of a 633.



The main armament consisted of four Jäger casemates for a 10.5 cm K 331 (f) gun; two on each side. The first on the side of Vazon Bay is fully restored and open to the public from April till October on Tuesdays and Saturdays from 1400 Hr till 1700 Hr. During Nov, Feb and March on Saturdays from 1400 Hr till 1600 Hr. The Jäger casemate has two ammunition rooms, a crew room, a close defence room, an engine room, a room for the empty cartridges and a gun room with the gun in perfect condition.

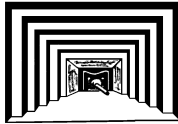
A 676 for a 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t) stands at the base of the headland, in the north of Vazon Bay. It is really worth the effort to go there.

6. HKB Gneisenau

This battery had 4 x 15 cm K18 guns. All shelters are on private property, but the *Leitstand* (fire control post) can be seen from a distance. It resembles a water tower. It stands on a field in the Rue de la Masse. Somewhat before this *Leitstand* you see a FlaK tower. Generally said, it is situated inside the island starting from "*Le Guet*". A site well worth revisiting to find the shelters and open emplacements.

7. Vazon Bay

This is certainly the largest bay of the island and well provided with bunkers. The special plan 631b for 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t) is the standard for the bay. The first WN you encounter lies around the only Martello tower of the bay. It was called *WN Rundturm*. It is a mixture of elements of older fortification and concrete. The headliner is the 631b that flanks to the south. It is wonderful camouflaged with brown granite stones. You see here a Tobruk for a tank turret.



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There is a wall around the Martello tower and within that wall that is connected to sea wall, you have an old guard house and a Vf crew bunker. On the sea wall there is a MG pit and a Tobruk. It's worth seeing .

A crew bunker stands on the car park at the golf site. Here is also a brick observation post. Just over the Vazon Bay Hotel there is another 631b special plan. Unfortunately the embrasure has been disappeared. This WN was called *Rundbucht Mitte*. The next WN is *WN Margen* and consists of two 631b special plan facing each other. You see the first at the Richmond kiosk. Notice the straight outer finishing. The other one lies a bit more to the south.

When you walk further to the south, you will notice an embrasure in the sea wall that still has even its armoured plate.

At the end of the bay stands a *Jäger* casemate, *WN Krossen*. On the top of the headland stands the second *Jäger* casemate next to the old Victorian fort *Fort Richmond*. Here you find some MG pits. The *Jäger* casemate is open and some armoured parts lies outside. But the site looked to me as being private property.

8. Saumarez headland

Certainly well worth visiting! Even though the 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t) casemate, the *Jäger* casemate and the searchlight bunker are all on private property. The headliner of *Stp Langenberg* is the naval range finding tower MP2 (*Marinepeilstand*). Its base looks like a Martello tower. In front of the MP2 a well preserved trench section leads to a Tobruk that had a *Renault* tank turret with a 3.7cm gun and a ammunition store. Further on it leads to a bunker for a *Sechsschartenturm*, unfortunately now gone. From here you have a nice sight on Lihou Island.

The south of the headland was defended by two *Jäger* casemates of which one ought to have been hidden in a hollow behind some greenhouses (not found). The second lies close to the 631b of L'Eree Bay and is almost buried. Here you see a shelter for a searchlight.

9. MKB Mirus

A visit here is mandatory when you visit Guernsey. Although it was not easy to find something. I found two open emplacements. Take the Route des Adams, coming from L'Erée. Turn to the left at the second road (If you see La Houquette primary school, you have gone too far). The first emplacement (gun nr 4) lies on the left hidden behind bushes on a fallow field. The emplacement is free of bushes. The second (gun nr 1) lies behind a country house after the next crossroad; private property. This emplacement is largely overgrown. The battery had 4 x 30.5 cm K 14 (r) with a range of 32 Km and a maximum range of 42 Km. I missed the Leitstand S446, the command bunker, 3 ammunition bunkers M448a and a few FlaK bunkers.



10. Rocquaine Bay

In the middle of the bays lies WN Grüne Düne. This WN is embedded in an anti-tank wall, PzM 12. Two 631b special plan casemates are flanking each other. Their embrasures are nicely incorporated into the wall. In the middle of the two 631's lies a bunker for a *Sechschartenturm*, although only three embrasures were used. The other are welded into the concrete. The copula has been cut away but you still can see the basements. A MG-post is also worked in in the anti-tank wall. A concrete edge protects the embrasure from projectiles from the 631. Next to the 631 stands a Vf personal shelter. Across the road there should be a personal bunker. Interesting WN, well worth stopping for.



11. Pleinmont

On the south-west edge of the island, Pleinmont, lie three interesting items. First the high naval range finding tower MP3 (*Marinepeilstand*). This massive construction has been restored by the CIOS. It stands in the middle of the moor and can be seen from far. Open from April until October on Wednesdays and Sundays from 1400 Hr till 1700 Hr. During November, February and March on Sundays from 1400 - 1600 Hr (Weather permitting).



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MP2 (Saumarez)

MP3 (Pleinmont)

The second one is the army coastal battery Generaloberst Dollmann. Its indication is 15/1265. HKAR. The battery was equipped with 4 x 22 cm K 532 (f) guns on open emplacements with two St ammunition bunkers each. A personal shelter per gun lies to the rear. You can leave the car at one of the two car-parks there. Here you see the fire control post (Leitstand) of the battery, also coded M4. It is a variant of a M132. Behind that car-park lies the first open emplacement, more or less overgrown. When you start walking westwards, along the cliffs you pass by the second and completely restored emplacement with its 22 cm gun. The barrel has been recovered from the cliffs at Jersey. The third emplacement is also more or less overgrown, and the fourth has disappeared.

The third topic is the famous naval range finding tower MP4 with a unique design. It lies a bit on a spit of land to the left of the M132.

A highly interesting area !





12. La Prévôté

South of the Rue de la Palloterie lies a land-point with the name La Prévôté. Here stand an army observation post, M5. It is a concrete tower in the shape of a Martello tower.

13. The underground hospital

The Germans built several basements on the island. Three of them are open for the public. I visited "*Hohlsgangsanlage 40*" and "*Ho 7*", the underground hospital and ammunition store. The two basements lie next to each other and are internally connected. Inside you got a real Maginot Line feeling when you wander through the abandoned tunnels. The museum is situated at La Vassalerie, St Andrew's.

14. The German Occupation Museum

This small but interesting museum is situated behind the Forest Church to the south of the airport. Open daily from 1000 Hr till 1700 Hr.

Outside you see a 7.5 cm PAK 40, the formidable 8.8 cm gun and a 10.5 cm K 331 (f) gun that comes from Fort St Aubin of Jersey. Its main topic is certainly the reconstruction a the White Horse casemate for a 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t) at St Peter Port. It is the most complete PAK 36 I have ever seen. See also the original German wartime maps of the island.

This museum is certainly a must on your visiting list.

15. Jerbourg Point

At this land-end lie the constructions of MKB Strassburg, being 3/604 MAA. The battery was equipped with 4 x 22 cm K 532 (f) guns. Ammunition and personal bunkers and an open emplacement lie across the Doyle Column. The others lie around the Idlerocks and Jerbourg hotels. The fire control post (Leitstand) M132 lies at the carpark with a view on Alderney, Sark, Herm and Jersey. Unfortunately the steel observation domes are gone. (See MKB Lothringen at Jersey).

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