



Dear Reader,

Here is the last newsletter for 2006. The major topic is a description of several Atlantikwall sites on the Belgian coast that have been put forward as classified historical monuments. And last but not least, I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very good 2007!

ATLANTIC WALL

Trenches at Stene



During the second half of 2006 a well preserved trench has been found at Stene. It belonged to the southern defences of the WN Wolf. The trench was constructed in brick and has several firing positions for one man. The trench was discovered while building a house. In the meantime it has been measured and put on a map. When the file with pictures and maps is ready, you can consult it at the Raversijde Museum. The pictures are from Bart Ketels.



The army coastal battery 3/826, Stp Seydlitz and Stp Seeckt are 3 of the 21 bunker sites that are on the preservation list as potential historical monuments.

Army coastal battery 3/826

This battery is located at Koninklijke Baan 151, in the St-Laureinsstrand at Middelkerke district. The fire control bunker was probably the best known bunker of the whole Belgian coast because it lies next to the road to Nieuwpoort and on top of it was the name of a camping site : "Camping Cosmos".

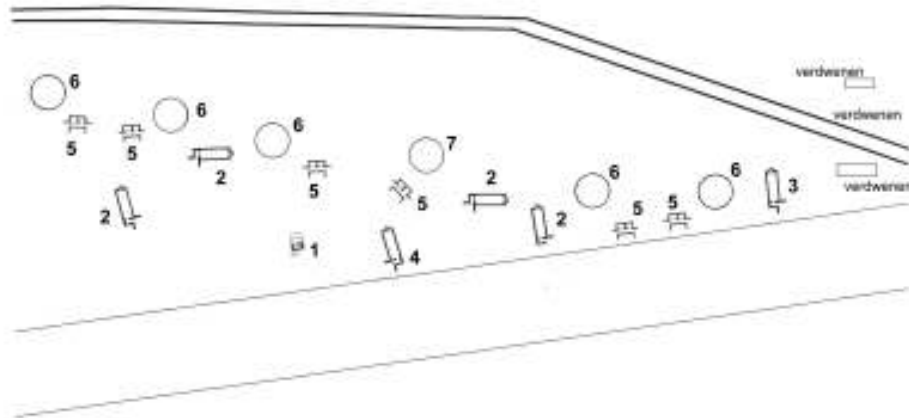
During the war Hitler decided that the defense of the coast was not only a task for the navy but also for the army. This was new to them and they had no previous experience of it. Such a lack



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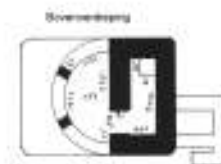
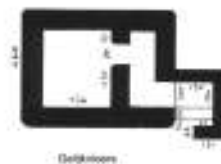
of experience can be seen in the thin construction of their bunkers. Another point of recognition is the number of guns. Generally they were equipped with old, captured guns and to compensate for this they were equipped with 6 guns instead of 4 (naval batteries had 3 to 4 guns).



On the German maps we find the first indication of this battery on the map of the 304th Infantry Division in 1941. It called the 3rd Battery fo HKAA 826 (*Heeres Küsten Artillerie Abteilung*) of HKAR 940 (HKAR = (*Heeres Küsten Artillerie Regiment*)). The battery was equipped with six 15.5 cm K 418 (f) guns. This was a captured French gun and the original name was "**Canon de 155 GPF**" (*Grand Puissance Filloux*).

From 15th November 1943 there was a reorganization of the army coastal batteries and this battery was called afterwards the 7th of the IInd Battalion of HKAR 1240. The battery kept the same kind of guns. The batteries are a strongpoint and each strongpoint was named. This battery was called Seydlitz.

The battery has actually 19 constructions consisting of 4 four different types. Following an aerial photo of 1953, one can see that only two constructions are gone, probably buildings in brick. All the bunkers are Vf-ones with walls of a thickness from 50 to 100 cm.



The fire-control bunker (nr 1) directed the battery. The walls are 1 m thick. At the ground level there is the entrance which is protected with concrete walls, an alley with an entrance to a room of 2.7m by 3 m. In the alley there is a ladder to the upper floor with the observation room.



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The battery has 6 crew bunkers, type Wellblech. Numbers 2,3 and 4 on the map. The walls are 80 cm thick and inside there is one room of 11 m by 3 m. At the end of such a room there is the shaft of the emergency exit. Only bunker 3 has still an accessible shaft. Bunker 4 has a well preserved gothic text on a beam in the entrance part.



There are also 6 ammunition bunkers (nr 5) on the site. They are small bunkers of 6.3 m by 4.4 m with walls of 50 cm. An alley leads through the whole bunker and on that alley there are two small rooms of 2.7 m by 1.5 m. Last but not least there are also 6 open emplacements (nr 6 and 7) with a diameter of about 12.8 m. In the concrete of number 7 you still can see some names of workers.

When you look closely at the location, you will notice that this battery lies in fact too close to the one around the St Laureins hotel. The point is that it's the same battery. I think that the Germans built very quickly some constructions to install their battery while they could build a much larger battery at the location of the hotel. From the moment that battery was ready they moved and abandoned their first location.

Last year the camping was dismantled and all the rubbish has been removed, except for the bunkers. Actually the government has decided to reconstruct the dunes and to incorporate the battery in it as a piece of our history. That's very good news because it's the only remaining coastal battery of the army in Belgium which is complete. Another one is the site near the water tower at Nieuwpoort.

Stp Seydlitz

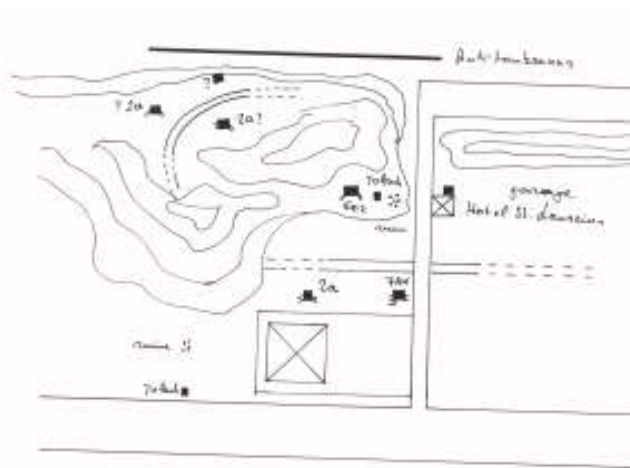
The remains are located near the St Laureins hotel at the Strandlaan and the Koning Ridderdijk in the St Laureinsstrand district

Unfortunately almost all the bunkers have been demolished and the remaining ones have been closed for a year. What remains is a Vf 7aK which is a kitchen bunker. Inside you "could" see the bunker number of the bunker (Ost-W 166) and the "L" to indicate "Leicht" (light construction). There is also a Vf 2a, crew bunker and a "St" (Ständig) crew bunker, Regelbau 502, "Doppelgruppenunterstand". But the site is still worth the effort to visit because there are still some interesting parts. First, there are two Tobruks, type 58d. A 58d has a



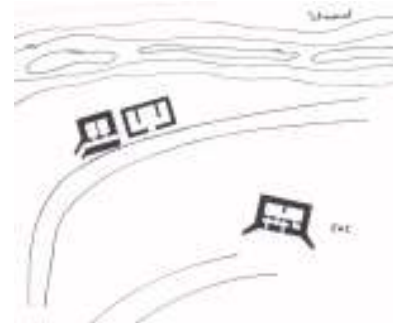


round man hole, while the more often found 58c has an octagonal man hole. Then, next to the hotel is a small garage for a search light. But the unique item is certainly the anti-tankwall in front of the dunes. This is the only remaining one on the Belgian coast.



The search light garage

Stp Seeckt



The remains of this large strongpoint lies at the military camping at Kustweg 101 at Lombardsijde. If you want to visit this site you have to ask access at the entrance gate. At the present only three bunkers remain : a "St" crew bunker, Regelbau 502, a special construction for a generator and a Vf crew or ammunition bunker with two rooms, a 52a or 7a. All the bunkers are closed and used as storage for the camping.



BOOKS

Les batteries côtières du Nord – Pas-de-Calais

This new book has 144 pages and its main contents are photo's. The majority of them haven't been published before. I looked into it and would recommend it. The photo's are really good and there are also some interesting maps like the mysterious, unknown casemate of the Friedrich August battery.

The authors are Alain Chazette, Alain Destouches, Bernard Paich, Jacques Tomine and Jacky Laurent. The editor is "Histoire et fortifications". Language : french. Price : 25 €.

ISBN 2-915767-07-6



Les batteries du secteur de Gris-Nez

This book describes the three batteries of Cap Gris-Nez, being Todt, Grosse Kurfürst and Gris-Nez. The book brings nothing new except for some new photo's of the Gris-Nez battery. The authors are Alain Chazette, Jacques Tomine and Emmanuel Boulard. The editor is "Histoire et fortifications".

Language : french. Price : 25 €. Language : French

ISBN 2-914767-06-8



De Atlantikwall op Goeree

This book describes the 300 bunkers in 40 strongpoints on the isle of Goeree in the Waal-Scheldt estuary. The two authors write about the construction, the history and the demolition of this unknown piece of the Atlantikwall. The book counts 128 pages and almost 200 photo's, maps and schema's. There authors are : Peter Heijkoop and Jeroen Rijpsma. Language : dutch. Price : 19.9 € . You can buy the book at the local bookshop or you can order it by Jeroen Rijpsma on j_rijpsma@hotmail.com



Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

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