



Dear Reader,

This fat edition of WMF News contains a description of the recently discovered radar school site at De Haan. It's good to know that this site is one of the 20 bunkersites that are preserved as a monument. Enjoy.

ATLANTIKWALL

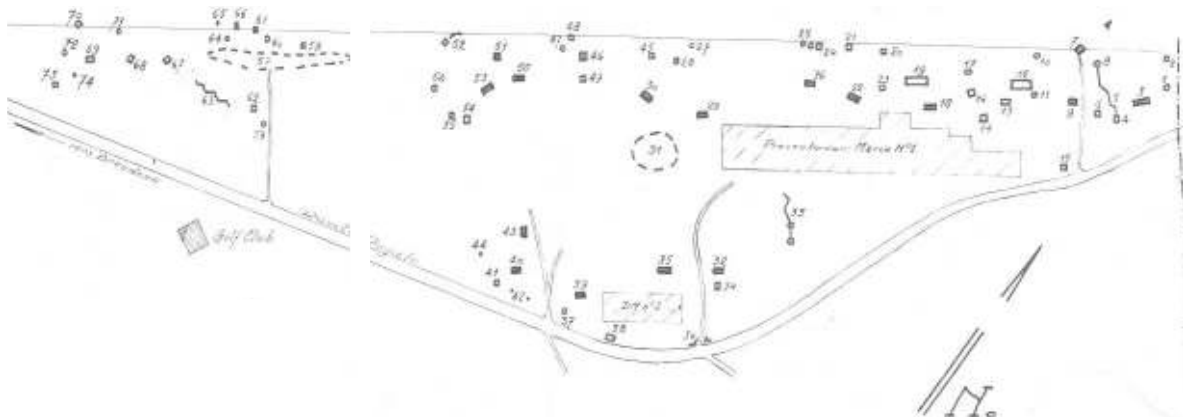
Stp Graf Spee, a radar school on the Atlantic Wall

A forgotten strongpoint of the Atlantikwall in Belgium has recently been re-discovered in De Haan. During the war the German Navy (Kriegsmarine) used the sanatorium as a RADAR school for the seamen. The main buildings were reused to accommodate the classes, different kinds of radars were installed in the dunes for teaching purposes and a large amount of bunkers were built around to protect the personnel.

Short History : The first documents relating to the existence of this position date from 1941 when the **1.Marine-Funkmessabteilung** installed its headquarters in De Haan (*KK Werner Hahndorff*). This unit was composed of 2 Tactical companies for operating the radars along the coast of Belgium and the Pas-de-Calais: 1.Kp. with headquarters in Wimereux (*Kpl Roderich Napp*), 2.Kp with headquarters in De Haan (*Kpl Gotthard Krömer*) and 1 Instruction company 3.Kp. in De Haan (*Kpl Wilhelm Göbel*). This last one took its quarters in the grounds of the sanatorium that later became the *Stp Graf Spee*. Beginning of 1944, the Headquarters of the 1.Mar-FunkMessAbt. was moved to Ghent in a former Belgian bunker (still existing today). In August 1944, under pressure of the Allied troops advancing more and more northwards, all the radar positions along the coast were evacuated and blown up and finally the Abteilung was dissolved during the first week of September 1944.

Maps and documents: Very little information can be found in the archives about this position as no German plan or wartime pictures of this position have survived the war, but the Engineer Corps of the Belgian Army investigated the position in 1946, drew a plan of it and listed all the constructions in an inventory. Some wartime Resistance reports mentioning this position also exist but this study would probably not be fulfilled if there were not all those pictures taken by former young patients and personnel member of the Sanatorium through the 50's, 60's and 70's. More recently we found in the archives of the Ministry of the Public Works (in charge of the destruction of those bunkers that could represent a danger to the public), documents highlighting the fate of some of the lost bunkers of the position.

Below is a drawing of the position made by the Engineers Corps in 1946. As one can see, this strongpoint was established mainly in the grounds of the Sanatorium but extended further more westward to reach a total length of almost 1.5 Km.





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All constructions made by the Germans are represented on the sketch, numbered from 1 to 72 and also briefly described in an inventory. Not all of these constructions are bunkers, a large part of them are just made completely of bricks or with just a thin concrete layer on the roof (FA constructions) and were rapidly destroyed after the war. The St bunkers (Standige Ausbau = with concrete roof of 2m thick) are almost all concentrated around the main buildings of the Sanatorium and these are, of course, the ones representing the biggest interest for any bunker enthusiasts. Below a self-made sketch representing the central part of the position were most of the surviving bunkers lay. For more clarity, the same numbering was used as in the one in the 1946 sketch..



From the different documents and field observations, we can identify for certain the **Nr 18, 22, 26, 30, 32, 39, 40, 50, and 53** all of them being of the type R502. There is a possibility that the **Nr 9** (out



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of the limit of the above plan) is a type R502 too and this would perfectly match with a Resistance report that gives 10x R502 for this position.

The **Nr 18** was destroyed in the 60's and the **Nr 32** more recently in 2003. The **Nr 32** was used as a storage room for the adjacent greenhouse.



We can see on this picture taken in the 70's the facing of the R502 supporting the roof of the greenhouse. Also the iron steps on the facing of the bunker can be seen.

(Archives Marc Doigny)

The R502 **Nr 22** still exists today but only a small part of the roof emerges from the ground, and it took us many hours of hard labour to dig out one of the entrances to enable us to investigate it.



The R502 Nr 22 as it can be seen today, almost completely sunk in the dune

The bunker has been stripped off of all its equipment but still has all the technical texts in a perfect readable condition...





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*...as the bunker code
number*

Ost-0
09-29

If you stand today on the place where the R502 **Nr 26** is supposed to be, you would think that that one has vanished too, but in fact this bunker still exists though inaccessible and completely obliterated from sight by new constructions in front of and on top of it. In the 60's the kids built the *Allergia*, an Art class room on top of it and later another building came lying in front of it, hiding the last remaining visible part of the bunker.

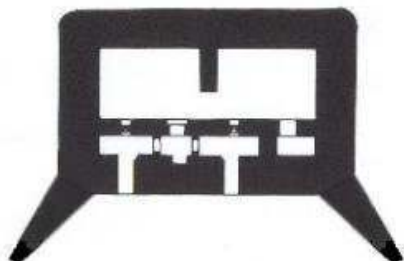


*The building of the Allergia by the kids on
top of the bunker... (Archives Marc Doigny)*



*... and the original way how the flanking wall
has been integrated in the wall of the new
building lying in front of the bunker*

Nr 30 could be found only by scanning its assumed position with a strong metal detector as it has completely vanished under the sand. We had to dig a few hours before we were able to free one of the entrances. This bunker was still in use as a climbing wall for the kids during their sport activities till the 70's when it was voluntarily buried under the sand.



*A plan of a regelbau R502.
This bunker could accommodate 20 men and was
built in large amounts on the Atlantikwall.
(modified original plan from Rudi Rolf)*



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Not German fresco's but post-war tags and graffities made by the kids of the preventorium inside this R502 (Pictures = Tom Olivers)



Another R502 we tried to dig out is the **Nr 39**. Its existence has been confirmed by the metal detector. This bunker had a similar fate as the **Nr 30**. During several years, it has been used as a foundation for the tower supporting a cable-glider until it was voluntary buried under tons of sand in the 70's. The ground above the bunker was so thick overgrown that we had to give up digging that one.



The Belgian Army assembling the cable-glider tower on top of the bunker somewhere in the 60's. (Archives Marc Doigny)

The R502 Nr 39 is clearly visible on this picture with the cable-glider tower on its roof (Archives Min. of Public Works)





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The next R502 is the **Nr 40** and is located in the actual Nature Reserve "Kijkuit". Today, only a small part of the flanking wall is still visible so that we had to dig it out in order to find one of the entrances.



The only visible part of the bunker is the top part of the flanking wall



The bunker has been stripped of all its equipment but...

...
the bunker code number is still readable

***Ost-O
09-34***

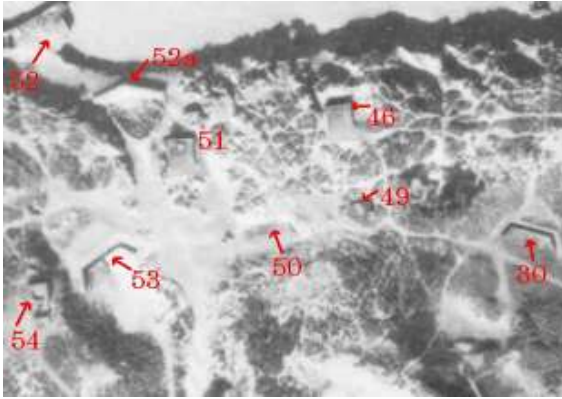
And finally we come to the last 2 R502, the **Nr 50** and **Nr 53** which rest today deep under the sand of the "Kijkuit" Nature Reserve. Only an aerial photo of 1953 and a Ministry of Public Works report from the late 60's confirm their existence although no signal could be obtained with the metal detector.



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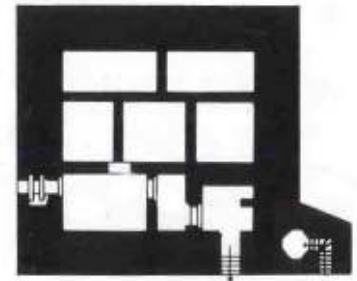
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A close-up view on an aerial picture of 1953 were different bunkers can still be seen. Among them, 3 of the R502: Nr 30, Nr 53 and the almost invisible Nr 50

The R502's are highly representative of the Regelbau design on the Atlantikwall, and were built in large amounts all along the coast from Norway to the Spanish border. What is less common to encounter nowadays are the Wasserbunkers. They are bunkers designed as drinking water storage for the needs of the garrison manning the strongpoints. Inside the *Stp Graf Spee*, we found no less than 3 of them and all of a different type.

The first one, and also probably the rarest, is the **Nr 35**, a Wasserbunker of 60 m³ type 198. It's probably the last surviving example of the whole Atlantikwall.



A typical plan of a 198 (modified original plan from Rudi Rolf)

The Sanatorium used both Wasserbunkers as incinerators. In fact, only the tobrukstand was modified with the addition of a chimney and used to burn the garbage bags. (Archive Marc Doigny)



View inside the bunker. Nothing remains of its original equipment

Here again the bunker code could be rediscovered

**Ost-O
09-38**



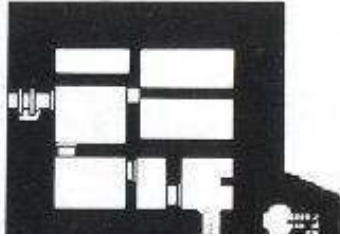


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The second Wasserbunker is the **Nr 29**, a type 195 of 30m³. Here again, the bunker has been used as an incinerator by the construction of a chimney above the tobrukstand. This bunker can be seen in the background of the previous black & white picture.



*A typical plan of a 195
(modified original plan from Rudi Rolf)*



*Today, only a small part of the roof is visible.
We had to dig to reach inside*



*All the ashes have been stored in different
rooms, so that everything looks quite dirty
inside*

Finally a third Wasserbunker, the **Nr 34**, was found in the grounds of the Sanatorium. Although this one does not belong to a standard type and must be qualified as a VF construction, this bunker is quite interesting because it still has its water tank inside: a Wasserbehälter of 1700L.



*The VF Wasserbunker has quite
small dimensions: 5,00 x 2,40 m with 0,50m
thick walls*



*We had to free the entrance before being able
to get inside...*



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Although the bunker was half flooded, we were surprised to find the Wasserbehälter in place and still in good condition. (Tristan Cools)



A restored Wasserbehälter of the same kind is on display in the Atlantikwall museum at Raversijde

After the R502's and the Wasserbunkers, we were able to identify another type of bunker in the Stp Graf Spee, the VF7a. A resistance report of 1944 reports that this model was built 3 times in this strongpoint although we were able to locate only one of them, the **Nr 43**.



The Vf7a as it could be seen in the 60's. Later the kids of the sanatorium built a kind of fort on it and it was then used as a playground. This one is now completely covered by sand. (Archives Marc Doigny)

Although they were scheduled to be destroyed in the late 60's, 2 other surviving bunkers are still standing on high dunes in the Kijkuit Nature Reserve, these are the 2 VF light Flak bunkers **Nr 41** and **Nr 54**.



The 2 VF Flak bunkers in the Kijkuit Nature Reserve





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Finally, late in the war, the Germans started to build 2 Schartenstand bunkers on each side of the position for flanking the beach, but only one, the **Nr 7** was ready when the position was evacuated in September 1944. The second one, the **Nr 52** was still in construction at the same time. We were not able to identify those flanking bunkers. They could be of the type R612, R677 or R680. They were demolished in the late 60's.



One of the rare pictures showing the flanking casemate Nr7 as it stood in 1963. Unfortunately, this view does not allow us to identify the right bunker type with certainty.

(Archives Marc Doigny)

This study is far from complete. We didn't talk about all the radar infrastructure on the site, there are more relics of bricks constructions on the west side of the position and 2 more Standige bunkers (**Nr 3** and **Nr 9**) are most probably still lying under the sand on the east side of the sanatorium. New documents come regularly to the light from archives, resistance reports, old pictures from people who attended the sanatorium as kids after the war and many other sources.

About one year ago, almost nothing was known about this position. Today many bunkers have been rediscovered, taken in pictures and measured. All of this is brand new material for the Atlantikwall research in our country and can contribute to a better preservation of this forgotten position.

This study would not be possible without the help of all my Bunkers Friends Archaeologists, *Tristan Cools, Bart Ketels, Peter Taghon, Vincent Forrez, Dirk Peeters, Tom Olivier, Karel Herbots, Marc Doigny, Gunther de Jonghe, Dirk Verstraeten and Benny Vermeire.*

Thanks also to *Mr André Viaene* from the Zeepreventorium for granting us the authorization to access the property and dig up the bunkers.

Important Note: The Zeepreventorium of De Haan is a private property and a medical institution. Our fieldtrips were organized there with authorization and under special circumstances to avoid any disturbance of the patients in the institution. It is not allowed to trespass on this property.

Pierre Nowak
17 Sept. 2007

Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

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