

WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2008

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Dear Reader,

I want to wish you all the best for 2008, especially good health !

This first edition of 2008 contains a review of our field trip to the 1917 battlefield at Passendale, an interesting discovery at Mariekerke, a problem at Ostend and as usual something about books.

Did you know that WMF-News enters its eleventh year? Indeed, eleven years ago I started with a small chapter with the name "WMF-Prikbord" (notice board) in the periodical Vesting of the Simon Stevin Centrum. From 2001 onwards the notice board became WMF-News and moved to internet.

Enjoy.

PASSENDALE 2007 / PASCHENDAEL 1917



90 years ago the bloodiest battle ever took place on the slight slopes around Ieper : the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917.

It started on June the 7th with a successful assault after the explosion of 19 mines as a preparation for the "final breakthrough" through the German lines. The allies had to pierce several German defence lines before they could advance towards Ostend. Before the attack started a huge artillery bombardment had to demolish the German defences. The bunkers resisted but the natural water alleys were destroyed and the water together with the rain turned the

landscape into a real swamp.

On July the 31st the assault by the British started when the rain was pouring down. The British got stuck in the mud and were eliminated by machine gun fire. After the British troops were exhausted the ANZAC troops renewed the assault and were successful on October the 4th by taking ' Gravenhagen. But on October the 12th it went wrong again. German machine gunners stopped wave after wave in the mud. Finally the Canadians took Passendale on November the 10th. These 100 days cost on both sides, 500.000 casualties!



This year many commemorations took place to remember the sacrifice of these victims.

In this framework WMF organised a field trip to the battle-field. Our guide was the curator of the Passchendaele Memorial Museum of Zonnebeke, Mr Franky Bostin, who made our day with his enthusiasm and in depth knowledge of the Western Front.



First we visited the museum and afterwards we went into the field to study several German and British bunkers : the German command bunker at Zandvoorde, British/German bunker at Hill 60, the German dressing station bunker of Cryer Farm, the German artillery casemate of Cheddar Farm, the British bunker at 's Gravenhage and the bunkers of the Flanders I Stellung at Tyne Cot. Meanwhile we followed the main direction of the assault. Our tour ended at the largest British cemetery in the world : Tyne Cot Cemetery.

ATLANTIKWALL

FlaK battery Stp Boelcke found at Mariakerke



This is probably the best know photo of Stp Boelcke with one of its 88 mm guns (Simon Stevin Centrum, Asseloos fund)

What do we know about the FlaK at Ostend?

On **February the 1st 1943** Abteilung (batalion) 252 of the 129th FlaK Regiment of the 16th FlaK Division was responsible for the port of Ostend. The command post was Regelbu L421A at the "Halve Maan".

Abteilung 252 had 5 batteries, three with six 88 mm FlaK guns (1st at Mariakerke, the 2nd at Bredene village and the 3rd at Ostend). The 4th and the 5th Battery had each fifteen 2 cm guns and four 60 cm search lights. Next to the 88 mm guns, the 1st Battery had three 2 cm FlaK guns for its own defense and two MG34 machine guns. 134

Last summer, one of our members, Mr Pierre Nowak, discovered the remains of an open emplacement of one the heavy FlaK batteries around Ostend. The open emplacement lies very close to the church of Mariakerke. You see it when you start walking towards Raversijde on the small road on the land side of the dunes. You see the back of an emplacement because the front part lies under the sand. This discovery leads us assume that the constructions in the dunes are still there, but covered with sand.



This is an overview of the whole battery looking in the direction of the church of Mariakerke. (Simon Stevin Centrum, Asseloos fund)



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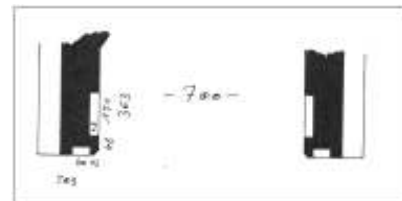
men manned the battery.

The 1st Battery moved to Dunkerque during 1943.

On a blueprint from **Dec 1st 1943** we can see that the 2nd Battery moved to the location at Mariakerke. The armament was approximately the same, only the secondary weapons were different : three MG 08/15's, three MG 26 (t)'s and a larger searchlight : 200 cm.

The 3rd Battery was renamed the 4th and stood behind Fort Napoleon where there is now a dock. The 5th and the 6th Batteries were light FlaK with fifteen 2 cm guns. The Ist , IIIrd and Vth Zug (section), all of the 6th Battery, stood at Nieuwpoort.

The last picture we have is from **April the 1st 1944** and almost everything remained. Only Stp Boelcke had a smaller searchlight of 150 cm and the 5th Battery got three 2 cm Vierling FlaK's as replacement of three single barrel guns.



The drawing of the emplacement and the actual photo.
(F Philippart)

"Halve Maan" bunkers under the sand at Ostend



The crew bunker for 15 men, Regelbau 656, in January 2007. (F Philippart)

During the autumn, one of our members warned us that the all the bunkers of Stp Dietl at the "Halve Maan" (half moon) near the port estuary have been covered with sand. Only the open emplacements survived. A sad destiny for a monument protected since October 1997 ! What's the present situation ? A company is busy with the destruction of the eastern pier and between the slipway and the Halve Maan they are building windmills. The owner, Maritieme toegang (Maritime Access), says they have the bunkers closed for security reasons. People could fall off it and strange things happened inside. They declared that a renovation project will follow after the finishing of the windmills. Let's hope !



Wanted ! Guides for Stp Schlieffen at Adinkerke

The curator of Stp Schlieffen, Guido Mahieu, is looking for colleagues to build a team of guides to the the strongpoint.

If you are interested, mail your coordinates to me (frank.philippart@telenet.be) and I'll pass them to Guido.

BOOKS

COMING SOON !

De Maginot Linie, van de Noordzee tot aan de Rijn

The French Maginot Line was probably the most advanced of all fortification lines built in the thirties to defend France against Germany. Nowadays these forts lie forgotten in forests and on desolate hills in France and locating them without a decent guide is a hard nut to crack. This book is just like the "Atlantic wall between Willemstad and the Somme" an historical travel guide with several line drawings and maps, present day and historical photo's and "then and now" situations. You discover all the forts from the sector of the Scheldt to the Rhine. Next to the different routes you read about the development and the construction of the line. Then you make a virtual tour through a fortress and you are informed about the different weapons and combat blocs. Of course you also read about what happened in 1940 and how the US troops conquered them again in 1944-45. The last chapter gives an impression of the different concept of the Maginot fortresses in the south of France at the Italian border.



Author : Frank Philippart

Language : dutch Year : February 2008 Number of pages : +/-352 p.

Editor : Lannoo

Interested? MAIL ME ! E-mail author : frank.philippart@telenet.be

Fort d'Eben Emael, 65 ans après 2006

Only two words are necessary to describe this book : "wonderful picture-album"! It's not a book with a description of the whole invasion and campaign. You'll find principally pictures and some plans of the ground levels indicating where the pictures are taken. Each page has 2, 3 sometimes 4 actual (black and white) pictures (taken 65 years after the German invasion) . Sometimes the author shows also some original pictures taken before and during the war! All the pictures are of excellent quality.

You will see photos of almost every corner, every detail, every weapon and cupola, inside and also outside the fort at the end of the book. It's really recommended for photo freaks of fortifications and for them who visited (a part) that great fortress!



Author : Georges Huygen

Language : French Year : 2006 Number of pages : +/-270p.

Editor : by the auditor himself

E-mail author : mag60@skynet.be

Source : E. Leysen



LES FORTS DE PONTISSE & DE LIERS (Frères d'armes herstaliens)

This beautiful book with several black and white (old, original and actual) pictures gives principally the history of the fortification "Pontisse" built around Liège in Belgium. After a short description about the Belgian fortifications around Liège, the author gives a very detailed description of the defences of the fortress, the complete history in and around that fortification in 1914, the transformations by the German during the first World War, the Belgian transformations in 1939 before the second World War and finally the campaign in and around Pontisse in 1940 based on the original campaign journals. This book is a "complete and unique" historical document.



Author : Daniël Bastin

Language : French Year : 2007 Number of pages : +/-204p.

Editor : Memogrames, Rues des 7 Etoiles n°13, 1082 Bruxelles ISBN : 2-930418-26-5

Source : E. Leysen

WN 62

When talking about D-Day, then you usually read about the experiences of the allied troops but never about what the Germans experienced. This small book is different. It tells you the story about a soldier, Hein Severloh, who manned a machine gun at the strongpoint WN62 that resisted the landing of the 16th Regiment of the 1st US Infantry Division. In the book you follow Hein up until a couple of years ago and you see how he struggled and finally conquered the terrible hours at Omaha Beach.

This small book is a must in your library of D-Day books.



Author : Hein Severloh

Language : French Year : 2004 Pages : 155

Editor : editions Heimdal ISBN : 2-84048-195-2

INDEX de la FORTIFICATION FRANÇAISE (1874-1914)

This book is an encyclopaedia of the French fortifications build by Séré de Rivière in France between 1874 and 1914.

After 15 years of researching in archives and on the field, walking several kilometres to visit most of those fortifications and taking more than 120.000 pictures, the four authors have now collected all their know-how in this "unique" book. More than 2.700 references are described in this book, almost every fortifications, shelters, troops, weapons, all the GPS-coordinates, plans, cross-sections, maps, etc.... The texts put on their beautiful website www.fortiff.be will also be rewritten in this book.



Authors: Mr. Frijns, Malchair, Moulins & Puelinckx

Language : French

Published : foreseen at the end of 2008. Estimated cost price : +/-75€

This PRE-PRE-INSCRIPTION is now possible by sending this following document to Mr. Luc Malchair, 36 rue Nolden, 4432 Alleur - Belgique
Source : L Malchair



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Bulletin de pré-sous-cription au livre « Index de la Fortification Francaise 1874-1914”

Nom du sous-signé :

Domicilié (Rue & n°) :

Ville :

Pays :

Je me déclare intéressé par la publication de l'Index de la fortification française 1874-1914 et ce à un prix avoisinant les 75 €. Le fait d'avoir rempli ce coupon ne m'engage à rien pour l'instant. Je marque simplement mon intérêt et le désir d'être contacté lors de la souscription.

.....Date et signature

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Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the proof-reading.

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