



WMF *News*

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin VV Centrum
Edition 2 of 2008

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Dear Reader,

Here's the second newsletter of 2008. It contains an invitation to take part in a survey about our association, and articles about FlaK batteries around Antwerp and about German World War I bunkers at Turnhout.

Enjoy.

SURVEY

We want to know your opinions about our association. This survey is in the first place for the members of the Simon Stevin vv Centrum, but also for everyone who's interested in fortifications. Thank you for spending a couple of minutes of your time.

Dutch : <http://www.simonstevin.org/enquete.doc>

English : <http://www.simonstevin.org/survey.doc>

ATLANTIKWALL

The heavy FlaK battery of Oorderen near Antwerp



Two of the captured French guns : 90 mm FlaK M39 (f) guns. The original name was 90 mm DCA Mle1926.

German Luftwaffe anti-aircraft (FlaK = Flugzeugabwehr Kanone) batteries were installed in the Antwerp agglomeration to protect the harbour area against allied bombing raids by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and later on also by the USA Air Force (USAAF). One of these batteries lay near the Brandstraat in Oorderen. In November 1940 the Germans commenced construction of the heavy FlaK site. On the site there was a fire-control tracking radar, a Würzburg (FuMG 39 T) that by means of an analogue computer (Kommando Gerät 36) aimed the guns on the target. This Würzburg with its limited range (30 Km) was put on the target by a Freya search radar (FuMG 401) which was located elsewhere and had a range of 300 Km. The unit that was located here from April 1943 onwards was the " Gemischte FlaK-Abteilung 295 (v)" and it stayed there until the liberation in September 1944. The guns were captured French guns. The emplacements were initially earth banks with the straight sides inside and the entrances reinforced with wooden shelves. Later during the war, the emplacements were constructed in concrete with concrete blocks (Formsteine). Inside there were niches for ammunition. Initially wooden barracks were built to house the crews and to store ammunition and supplies. Later on a wall of Formsteine was built straight to the wooden walls (protection against bomb fragments). Somewhat later again, roofs of reinforced concrete were laid on these barracks. A layer of asphalt was laid on it, protection against damp penetration. Then the wooden shelves were removed and windows were cut



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down in the concrete. Ammunition storages were concrete bunkers or Formsteine half buried in the ground and protected with earth on the outside.

On the site there were also brick buildings with variable sizes, constructed with bricks of 20x10x5cm. The walls were 65 cm thick the roof was reinforced concrete. On several roofs there were small towers with slits for rifles for defence of the area.

After the war, in 1948 and 1949, it was said there were plans to reuse the empty building as emergency housing, but it was cancelled due to the lack of good access roads and drinkable water. Thus only cattle were housed in these buildings until 1965. Then everything was pulled down and the area was raised with sand for the construction of the GM-factory that build Opel cars.

Sources

- "Historisch-geografische sprokkelingen uit het Antwerpse Polderland deel III", page 764 from Robert Havermans from the Documentatiecentrum Antwerpse Noorderpolders.

- "België in oorlog" "Toen en Nu nr3 Antwerpen 1941-44 Deel a" from Jean Dillen and André Vandewynckel

Source : Patrick Lefret



Another captured gun, a 75 mm M17/34 (f) FlaK. The original French name was "Canon de 75mm modèle 1928 contre aeronefs sur remorque Schneider modèle 1917/1934". You can deduce from this that the barrel dated from 1917, the chassis from 1928 and the aiming sight from 1934.



An emplacement with ammunition niches for an anti-aircraft gun. In the background you see the shunting station Antwerpen-noord with a water tower (since gone) for steam locomotives.



One of the brick crew barracks originally built with windows and doors. On the reinforced concrete roof you see the small turret with slits for close defence purposes.



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The plan of the battery and the legend of the constructions

- | | | | |
|-------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 17 | Warehouse in brick | 2 3 4 6 13 15 16 18 19 20 21 24 | Living quarters in brick |
| 7 8 | Garage | 9 14 | WC |
| 10 | Guard post | n | Ammunition niches |
| 23 25 | Platform in brick with staircases | 26 27 28 29 30 31 | Open emplacement for FlaK |
| 5 | Living quarters in brick with two platforms for range finder | | |
| 11 | Living quarters in brick with two platforms for anti-aircraft machine guns | | |
| 12 | Living quarters in brick with one platform for anti-aircraft machine guns | | |
| 22 | Living quarters in brick with small radar | | |



This is the Würzburg tracking. In the background you see the different barracks where they are building walls around them against bomb fragments. When the walls are ready, roofs are laid on it and they could start with cutting out windows and removing the wooden inner frame.



The Flak batteries in Antwerp

Actually we have three organization charts about the FlaK units in Antwerp.

7.5 cm and higher are heavy anti-aircraft guns (s.FlaK) and every lighter caliber are light anti-aircraft guns (leFlaK).

On the 1st of January 1943 there's Res FlaK Abt 295 (FlaK-Untergruppe Antwerpen) with 6 batteries : 1/295 with four 9 cm and two 2 cm guns, 3/295 with four 9 cm and four 2 cm guns, 4/295 with twelve 2 cm guns, 4/295 with fifteen 2 cm guns, 3/S with six 7.5 cm and two 2 cm guns and 4/S with twelve 2 cm guns. "S" is an indication of a school (Schule). Together with Abteilung 295 was the third Abteilung of searchlight Regiment 32 active with three batteries searchlights.



On the chart of 10 December 1943 we retrieve "Gemischte FlaK-Abteilung 295 (v)" again belonging to FlaK Reg 95. (FlaK Reg 95 was composed of the following Abteilungen : 559, 594, 614 and 691. The regiment belonged to FlaK Division 16)

The heavy FlaK batteries on 1 Dec 1943 were 1/295, 2/295, 3/295 and 4/295 with 90 mm guns and battery 1/594 with 75 mm guns.

"Gemischte" means mixed, because the Abteilung had also light FlaK batteries : 5/295 with fifteen 2 cm leFlaK's, 6/295 and 2/691 with each twelve 2 cm leFlaK's. They also all have two 2 cm leFlaK's. The light batteries had four and five 60 mm searchlights. Only heavy battery 1/295 had one of 150 mm. Notice that the Abteilung had two batteries from other Abteilungen, namely 2/691 and 1/594.

Next to Abt 295 there was the "Feld-FlaKartillerie-Schule (West) 30" active with 6 batteries : 1/S with four 8.8 cm and three 2 cm guns, 2/S with four 8.8 cm and two 2 cm guns and one 2.5 cm gun, 3/S with four 7.5 cm and three 2.5 cm guns, 5/S with twelve 2 cm guns, 6/S with nine 2 cm guns and 7/S with three 1

cm and four 3.7 cm guns and one 2 cm Vierling gun. Four batteries of searchlights of Abteilung 559 belonged also to FlaK Reg 95.

On an overview of 1 Apr 1944 we see that battery 1/594 no longer belongs to the Abteilung and that battery 3/295 received two extra 90 mm guns. Battery 2/295 received three more leFlaK's and the 2 cm leFlaK's of battery 2/691 were replaced by twelve 3.7 cm leFlaK's. We see also that they "lost" some searchlights. The school "lost" battery 3/S and battery 6/S increased their guns from nine to twelve. At that moment they didn't mention the searchlight Abteilung anymore.

That is what the charts are telling us, but what was effectively there?

We have only the reports made by the Ministry of Defence in the late forties that describe locations for FlaK batteries (DCTA in French) and in another document such an emplacement is described as for a field-battery. A link between the location and the unit is not known yet.



The heavy FlaK batteries were located as follows : The "Oorderen" battery lay to the north of Antwerp. In the south there was the "Wilrijk" battery at the crossing of the Prins Boudewijnlaan and the Oosterveldlaan. At the east of Antwerp, there were two : the "Brem" near the football stadium and "Galifort" also in Deurne. For Galifort we have some doubts because it's too close to Brem. There was also a battery at Zwijndrecht (ref to document of Jan 1941), at the fort of Haasdonk, a mixed battery at Borsbeek and a battery at Vremde. The leFlaK's were placed all over the city.

A link between the location and the unit is not known yet. So, if you know more about this by means of documents or testimonies, please let me know, in order to complete the puzzle.

Sources : Simon Stevin Centrum and Jean Dillen

An interesting acquisition, the files of Mr Asseloos about Ostend

Last summer we had the opportunity to buy all the files of Mr André Asseloos who passed away in 2001. He made a decent research of everything that happened in the Ostend region during the Second World War. In these files we found copies of German documents and maps, resistance reports and drawings, info about air raids, civilians etc... Next to the documents there are hundreds of photos of Ostend with the defence works in Ostend, Kriegsmarine vessels, high officers visiting the city, crashed airplanes, bombed houses and last but not least the batteries around Ostend : MKB alzwedel-Neu, MKB Salzwedel-Alt, the FlaK of Stp Boelcke, the railroad battery E690 at Bredene, the E-Boat bunker, the "Halve Maan" and MKB Kursaal. Finally there are also a few maps with photo's and plans of the First World War batteries like the Aachen, Oldenburg and Cecilia battery.

Who knows more about the German radar post near Wortegem?



By coincidence I passed via a secondary road from Wortegem to Oudenaarde and saw these constructions. I recognised two pedestals for a Würzburg radar in the field on the left. One stands in the middle of the grain together with the brick building. That building looks German in my opinion and is probably related to the radar. The other pedestal was more accessible and I added these pictures of it. Maybe it's interesting to inspect the building and the pedestal after the harvest with the agreement of the owner.

Does someone know more about this location?

Paul Thibaut



*Meanwhile more details about the radar site are known.
The name is GOLDAMMER and it's a type : " Stellung 2. Ordnung".
To see the other sites, check this out :*

http://www.lostplaces.de/cms/component/option,com_fmdb/task,1/?typ=19&quad=1&sort=0&Itemid=48

BELGIUM

1917 German bunkers in Turnhout

A 1917 German "shelter"-bunker of the "De Wieltjes" bridgehead, (part of the "Stellung Antwerpen-Turnhout"), was recently completely renovated. The bridgehead consists of two observation bunkers on the foreground and two "shelter"-bunkers for the machine gunners.



They started the construction of the bunker at the end of 1916. It was reinforced with railroad rails. Depending on what the Germans got hold of, the bunkers were called tramway or railroad bunkers. For the construction of these bunkers they used tramway rails (ex. The line between Turnhout and Geel). The rails can be seen very well in the roof of the bunker. The bunker was connected to trenches with machinegun emplacements. These were protected with two thick rows of barbed wire that were requisitioned from the local farmers.

They were only allowed to border the cattle field with one wire. After the war the barbed wire was used again to border the fields and for the construction of reinforced concrete fencing posts.

The bunker was cleaned from superfluous vegetation and equipped with doors and walking grids. Concrete staircases lead to the two entrances. A large information panel and a bench are placed next to it. Together with the installation of the information panel a brochure is composed with more detailed information. This brochure is available at the Tourist Office and the "Milieu" (environment) Service of the city of Turnhout.



The bunker lies below near the bridge of the Nassaulaan over the canal Dessel-Turnhout. The bicycle-track "De blauwe lus" leads next to the bunker. This track is 128 Km long and follows the canals Dessel-Schoten, Dessel-Kwaadmechelen en the Albert canal.

In wintertime the bunker is closed for the bats, but in the summer the doors are open to viewing. This project is proof that environmental preservation and history can dovetail perfectly .

Source : George Melis Photo's : Herman Van Eyndhoven



Belgian named bunker

Otto Muller has together with Rudy Thys made a list of all bunkers around Namur and this is available on internet : www.bunkerindex.eu .

They have found a bunker that has a concrete seal with a text. "A JAU-MOT"

It's the only Belgian bunker that has a name. It stand in the BOIS D' HAMBRAINE near Namur.

Is there anybody who can tell us more about the sense of this text? Is a name or a slogan?



Source : Otto Muller

BOOKS

Bruggehoofd Gent

The book about the Belgian bunker line "Bruggehoofd Gent" (Bridgehead Gent) became recently available. It counts 96 pages and has many illustrations. The book discusses the military and political backgrounds, the construction of the line, the look of the bunkers with attention to the shape, the camouflage and the armament. In the book there are detailed maps for who want to visit the bunker line.

You can buy the book from the author or the editor.

Author : Erik janssen

Editor : Uitgeverij De Krijger

ISBN: 978-90-5868-183-6.

Price : 15 € + 4 € port costs.



De Maginot Linie, van de Noordzee tot aan de Rijn

Just to let you know that the travel guide with historical and technical information about the famous Maginot line is *available* since February 2008. See WMF-News 2008/1.

Author : Frank Philippart

Language : dutch First edition : February 2008

Number of pages : 487 p.

Illustrations : 286

ISBN : 978-90-209-7163-7

Editor : Lannoo

Price at the bookshops : 22.5 EUR

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



Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

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