



WMF - News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevinstichting
Edition 1 of 2002 Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Dear all,

This is the first edition of 2002 with facts and observations about fortifications in Belgium and abroad. You too can use this medium to announce something or to tell about you have seen. Just send me your text and I will publish it.

With best regards,

Frank Philippart

Belgium

Royal bunker

During the years of 1930 the directorate for Passive Air-protection built a bunker under the luxury country house Waux-Hall in the Warande park in Brussels. It was the intention the king and the government would guide the country from out of the bunker during a conflict.

The Germans found the bunker and made it a command post. In September 1944 the Britons got in for a short while. After the war, the Civil Protection made a store of it.

The entrance to the bunker was well hidden in the wooden wall-lining of the mirror-hall of the country-house.

You enter the bunker via a staircase and two locks with gas-doors.

The entire complex has a surface of 700 m², but the real bunker counts 200 m². It has 5 rooms. Next to the major rooms there is also a filterroom with a gas-generator, a telephone central with 600 lines and a room with a Morse apparatus. From here they could start the air-raid alarm in Brussels.

For years people thought there was a direct underground alley from the parlement to the royal palace. This became partially false. There is a connection, but via the bunker. Actually one has seen these alleys were already closed for years.

Brussels would like to install a museum about the Cold War in the bunker, but they still have get an agreement because in 1945 the government decided that the city of Brussels has to keep the bunker ready at any time.

(Via E. Leysen)

Bunker at Kinrooi

Kinrooi is situated close to the Dutch border above Maaseik (Limburg). Three bunkers were built at Kinrooi in 1935. They were a part of the "forward shoved line" which consisted of 12 bunkers. Two bunkers at Kinrooi were already demolished. The last remaining stands next to a pub on the Weertersteenweg to Molenbeersel. It is called a ACI, "Abri contre irruption", which means a casemate against an invasion. It is a huge bunker with walls of 1 m thick. The armement consisted of a frontal 4.7 cm anti-tank gun, a MG and a search-light. Two MG's are flanking each site of the bunker. Last but not least the bunker has a copula with six embrasures for a light MG. One entrance and an emergency exit are completing the bunker.

The municipality of Kinrooi has undertaken steps to protect it. (source Mr Gerits)

Drawing : Patrice Wijnands

Legend : 1. MG, 2. 4.7 cm AT gun, 3. Tube for launching grenades, 4. Searchlight, 6. Ventilation, 8. Turret for light MG, 10. Entrance defense, 11. Concrete foundation

St-Katelijne-Waver buys bunker



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During the Interbellum Belgium built a bunker-line between Koningshooikt and Waver. This was the famous KW-line. This line consisted for the majority of MG-bunkers. One of them is located at the Erfstraat in Onze-Lieve-Vrouw-Waver. (This village belongs to St-Katelijne-Waver.) The town-council decided on 4 February to buy the bunker for 247.89 EUR because it's a representative model for the line and still well preserved. (source Mr Wuyts, via Mr Cannarts)

To the north of Koningshooikt, there was the inundation of the Nete, with bunkers, and the anti-tank ditch to the Schelde. To the south from Waver to Namur, the defense line existed of an "iron wall" of Cointet-elements. This was an anti-tank hindrance which looked like a gate. One of the MG-bunkers of the line

German bunker line of 1917 protected?

In the autumn of 2001 a proposal to accept a German bunker line from the first World War as a monument of history has been sent to the Ministry of Monuments & Landscapes. It concerns the so called "Vorder Stellung Antwerpen". This line was built in 1917. It's function was completely different than the "Holland Stellung" and the "Antwerpen Turnhout Stellung". These were a defense line against an invasion via the Netherlands. The "Vorder Stellung" was a fall-back line of the Westfront. The bunker model built a the same as built for the "Antwerpen Turnhout Stellung". Almost all available models are present and many of them are still open. (The Germans closed them during the second world war to avoid that the resistance occupied them)

News from the Western Front

The first news concerns the remains of the German front line Bayernwald in the Croonaert woods. For year the owner of the site received hundreds of visitors until the middle of the years 80. From then on the exploitation stopped. The last years the province and municipality Heuvelland did many efforts to restore the site. They hoped to get it in long lease, but shortly the site was sold to somebody else. This meant the negotiations started over again. The new owner would like to keep it for hunting purposes. Next to that the owner would be agree to open the site for tourists. Finally it turns around the invoice for the restauration.

The second news comes from one of the neighbour hills of the Kemmelberg. This one is called the Letteberg. Between 4 April and the end of May 1917, the 175th Tunnelling Cie worked under the hill on a brigade headquarter for the 9th corps.

Today you can see the four bunkers and the entrance to the HQ in the west flank of the hill.

It are constructions of armored concrete of gravel on corrugated iron, with one entrance and a window to the west. There is a distance of aproximatly 45 m between them. Actually they are sanded and the galleries are collapsed.

A restauration with limited resources is possible on a short term 6197 EUR is foreseen for this project and will start during spring. Trees will be cut the trees that hinder the sight and earth has to be removed from out the bunkers. An entrance and a info panel will complete the site. Finally they will see if the bunkers can be visited freely. They foresee that the bunker will be open to visitors at the beginning of the summer. The parties that are involved here are the and municipality Heuvelland and ABAF (Association for Battlefield Archeology in Flanders).

Via R. Billiau

Atlantikwall

Scare bunker at Koksijde



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On the flank of the dune Hoge Blekker I found a Regelbau 677, *Schartenstand für 8.8 cmPAK 43/41 ohne Nebenr.* He is not damaged, just half filled with sand, but you can recognize the Regelbau-structure inside. On the roof you see the remains of a SR9 periscope. He is flanking over the dunes to Oostduinkerke-Bad. Some years ago I've seen a photo of it and just only the roof was visible.

The large command bunker SK1 at Antwerpen

The SK1 museum in the park De Brand will be open at the following days :

Sat and Sun 6 – 7 Apr, 4 - 5 May, 1 – 2 Jun, 6 – 7 Jul, 2 – 3 Aug, 7 – 8 Sep, 5 – 6 Oct and 2 – 3 Nov. from 1000 Hr to 1700 Hr.

Visits for groups are always possible. Call 00/32/(0)486/21.13.15

Mortar bunker restored at Jersey

The land-end Corbiere with the lighthouse is not only interesting for the landscape but also for the bunkers. During the war this point was transferred into a strongpoint, "Stp Corbière". One of the bunkers was a mortar bunker, a Regelbau 633. A 633 was equipped with a M19, 5 cm Fortress mortar. The bunker has the particularity to be connected to a 634 with a Sechsschartenturm which laid a couple of meters higher. Unfortunately both turrets have been removed in 1953 with explosives during the scrap drive.

Some years ago the CIOS (Channel Islands Occupation Society) took over the complex to restore it. These brave guys made a replica the mortar and the dynamo to provide the bunker of power. During the last winter they re-concreted the damaged mortar room upto the level of the turret. They have also been busy restoring the ammunition room and finished making over 2600 mortar bombs, which are made from wood with plastic fins, to fill the two ammunition racks and the storages recesses under the turret. Now they still have to make 500 clips to hold all these bombs. They are also getting a fibreglass turret cast which they hope to have installed by the end of the year.

Last but not least, they started some restoration work on the 634 Sechsschartenturm. They are trying to get the entrance to this bunker opened up. One day they hope to restore it too and to put a fibreglass turret back.

WMF helped by sending them photos of the interior and exterior of the 633 at Oostende.

Source Mr A. Macolm (CIOS)

General view on Stp Corbiere. The 633 lies in the foreground.

Maginot Line

New association : PO Sentzich

The small work Sentzich has finally an association that takes care for it. It's a monobloc work with a elevating MG turret and two gun chambres. One has a 3.7 cm anti-tank gun and a twin machine gun, the other one has only a 3.7 cm anti-tank gun. (Each time you see a mentioning of a 4.7 cm or a 3.7 cm, that mean the gun could be exchanged with a twin machine gun). The small work lies in the valley of the Moselle in the village with the same name at the feet of the Galgenberg.

The new association has made a titan work in it. It's like new. It looks like the construction companies have just only to pass the keys to the equipment.

The association calls : "**Association de PO de Sentzich**". The president is Mr Jean-Jacques Tritz, 29, Rue des Peupliers, F 57570 Gavisse. Tel 33/82.55.43.22

One of the members told me the PO will open its door officially on 14 July 2002.



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Frontal view of PO Sentsich.

New association : Casemate de Bréhain

One of the largest works of the sector of Crusnes was the large work Bréhain. Very close to it, there was the single CORF casemate called "Casemate Ouest de Bréhain". Due to the fact it laid so close to it that the French had to idea to connect it to their basement. Therefore it is also called bloc 9 or CM 2. But the war stopped the works and only the shaft and a part of the alley is ready. Since a few year a new association is busy to restore the casemate.

The association calls : "L'association du Secteur Fortifié de la Crusnes". The president is Mr Alberti Gilles. The address is 14, Route de Bréhain la Cour, F54190 Bréhain la ville. Tel : 33/06.08.35.17.79. Email : casemate@yahoo.fr.

Day-voyages of the Simon Stevinstichting

The Simon Stevinstichting organises together with the travel organisation VTC two voyages to the Maginot Line.

*** Saturday, June 01 2002, Galgenberg and its environment**

We will study the working of the Maginot line. It does not exist of large and small works, but also of a network CORF casemates, the MOM pillboxes, observation bunkers, personal shelters and trenches.

We visit the large work Galgenberg and in the afternoon we will walk through a nice wood along the trenches with the pillboxes to the personal shelter l'Abri du Cattenom. Meanwhile we pass via the architectural unique ammunition entrance of the large work Kobenbush.

A diner is foreseen at Bastogne.

The explication will be done in the dutch language.

Guides : Frank Philippart and Emmanuel Leysen

*** Saturday, September 21 2002, La Ferté and Fermont**

La Ferté has known the most tragic destin of any of the Maginot works. It had only one elevating turret for two mixed weapons. The German engineers succeeded to have a heavy explosive charge exploded against to the turret by which it was dislocked. Huge fires made the block ilivable and the crew escaped to the underground gallery without having the door closed. Gases found their way down too and more than 100 man were death from asphyxiation. Knowing that the commander was not allowed to surrender the fort, makes it even more tragic.

After the lunch the large work Fermont will be visited. The German tried to attack the fort with heavy artillery , but the French resisted and succeeded.

A diner is foreseen at Bastogne.

The explication will be done in the dutch language.

Guide : Hans Vermeulen

For more info about the two voyages (prices, departure times etc) see the VTC organization. Tel : 32/(0)3/449.36.80

Books

"Vesting Antwerpen" about bunkers



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In the series "België onder wapens" a new book from the editor De Krijger appeared : "Vesting Antwerpen. Deel IV. Bunkers en bunkerstellingen (1914-1945)". The author is the former colonel of the Belgian Army Robert Gils. This series handles over the evolution of the fortifications around Antwerpen.

This book treats specific the bunker and bunker lines from 1917 to 1945.

The first part handles about the German bunker line of 1917 in front of and above the city. The second part tells about the efforts the Belgian army has made to protect the city with an anti-tank ditch and by building machine-gun bunkers.

Finally the German bunkers in and around Antwerpen are discussed.

The book is largely ventilated with drawings, photos and explications about the 1940 strategy of the Belgian army.

A very interesting book about an almost not known part of the history.

The book counts 96 pages.

It can be ordered by the Simon Stevinstichting.

Price : 15 EUR + 2.5 EUR transport.

Info : 32/(0)3.236.55.53 Hugo Magielse : simon.stevinstichting@antwerpen.be

ISBN : 90-5868-02-4

Thanks to Mrs Mayo for spell checking.