



WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevinstichting
Edition 1 of 2004

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Dear Reader,

Here, finally, is the first newsletter of 2004 with articles and news from Belgium, France, Germany and the Channel Islands. I wish to thank my colleagues from abroad for their contributions! Enjoy it.

60 YEARS AGO

The pocket of Dunkerque

2004 is a year for remembrance. 60 years since D-Day, the parachute drops at Arnhem and Nijmegen, the landings at Hoofdplaat, Bastogne and other liberations. But it is also 60 years ago that Dunkerque became a German pocket from September the 8th 1944 until May the 9th 1945 (one day later!!). Dunkerque was ordered to be a Fortress and became a real fortress with a mass of bunkers and artillery. The pocket was first guarded by the Canadians and from October 1944 on by the *Autonomous Czech Tank Brigade* of General Liska.

To put this forgotten event in the spotlight WMF organised a bunker tour to the pocket on Saturday March the 20th. 10 brave participants defied the stormy weather and visited in the morning the huge lock bunker of Ecluse Wattier, *FlaK*-, *PAK*-, personal- and armoured turret bunkers at the quays. In the afternoon we visited the field batteries that lay during 1944-45 in the flooded area behind the pocket. We saw the remains of a gun, camouflaged bunkers, open emplacements, personal and ammunition bunkers and a dressing station bunker. The tour ended with a visit to the battery *Stp Schlieffen* at Adinkerke.



The participants of the Simon Stevinstichting around a Sechsschartenturm in Dunkirk.

ATLANTIKWALL

New book : "De Atlantikwall. Van de Schelde tot de Somme"

Finally a real travel guide to the Atlantic wall will soon be appearing. First of all the history of the wall will be explained including the building up of the bunker line from the sea inwards to the land with descriptions of all the possible bunker types. Railroad guns will be discussed; they played an important role on the coast. But the majority of the book is spent on the most interesting



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strongpoints between the Schelde and the Somme. For example the HQ at Antwerpen, the defences of Vlissingen, the coastal and field batteries in Belgium and France, mysterious bunkers in the inland of the Pas-de-Calais, the large guns at the Cap like the Todt battery, the V2 and V3 sites, the huge defences of Boulogne, the tunnels of the Mont Neufchâtel and the forgotten sites downwards to the Somme. Per site you will find a roadmap, a description, the units deployed there with their armament and what happened there. Moreover the story behind the evacuation in 1940 and the pocket of 44-45 of Dunkirk and the liberation by the Canadians will also be told. The authors are Frank Philippart, Dirk Peeters and Alain Van Geertruyen. The editor is Lannoo nv. It will appear at the beginning of May 2004.

Stp Schlieffen finally renovated

This field battery was unfortunately hidden in the water catchments area Cabour at Adinkerke (Be). In spite of the fact that it was classified as a monument, it was barely accessible. The problem was due to local politics. Sometimes it brings to the fore a project or a man, but in this case it froze development of the site. Luckily thanks to two very determined men, the 611 and the 610 are now cleaned and freed of vegetation and open to visitors. The next step will probably be the renovating of one of the six open emplacements. Moreover they have great plans to install a war museum next to the interesting water museum. Well done, continue!

CIOS Jersey on the web

The Channel Islands Occupation Society has now ITS own web SITE
<http://www.ciosjersey.fsnet.co.uk/>

Jersey : Casemate receives gun

At the St Ouen's Bay is a strongpoint called *La Carriere* with as main armament a 4.7 cm PAK 36 (t) in a 631 flanking to the Corbière lighthouse and a 10.5 cm K 331 (f) gun in a *Jäger* casemate firing to the other side. After the war the guns were removed during the drive for scrap.

A 10.5 cm gun that originally was emplaced at Rozel Fort was moved to Noirmont Point where it stood for years. During August of 2003 CIOS moved the gun to the *Jäger* casemate of *La Carriere*. The casemate is periodically open to the public under the aegis of the C.I.O.S. Jersey Branch. Further details in Channel Islands Occupation review No.31, just published. Jan 2004

(EDITOR'S NOTE. Good news, because the 631 of the same Stp was already open to the public)

Info : John Germain

WESTWALL

Texan buys Höcker line

By Patrice Wijnands

Indeed the Westwall as collector's item....

During the penultimate week of January the German media announced that a piece of the Westwall was bought by an American millionaire from Dallas (Texas).

What happened?



It concerns a Höckerline, model 1939, between the villages Kehr and Losheim in the federal state Rheinland-Pfalz near the Belgian border. The village had already for a long time thought of building a road through this anti-tank barrier. Coincidentally the Texan asked the war museum of Diekirch (Lux) if it would be possible to buy a piece of Hitler's Dragon teeth. He has already in his collection various statues of Stalin and recently also one of Saddam Hussein.

On his account they have taken away a piece of 14 m out of the Höcker line. The bases of 80 cm thick were sawn through for easy transport. Small pieces were donated to the museums of Diekirch and Elsenborn. The majority went to Dallas.

The reaction of Monument Departments and Westwall researchers to this were extremely negative and they hope that it was only a single incident. In the neighboring state Nordrhein-Westfalen the Höcker are in principle under protection as a monument, although A piece of Höckers 100 m long had to make way for a factory in 1997. Everything is relative....

(EDITOR'S NOTE : I would like to have a piece of the Pentagon as souvenir.....)

BELGIUM

New West-Vlaanderen (be) WAR MAP

This new map called "In Flanders Fields" shows all battlefield locations and military relics in the province of West-Vlaanderen . The scale is 1/100.000.

You will find 20 museums, more than 230 bunkers of the First and Second World Wars , 170 cemeteries, tanks, 31 monuments of World War I, 10 mine craters, 15 city walls and many other items. The *Westtoer* organization commissioned the map and it was produced by ex Lt-Col Fons Wuyts who is also co-operator of the *Koninklijk Legermuseum* in Brussel. The map is illustrated with 50 pictures and has a short explanation of their history

You can buy the map "In Flanders Fields" for € 4,95 at:

- Any West-Vlaanderen. Tourist office
- In the NGI, *Abbey ter Kameren* shop 13 – 1000 Brussel.
- In the *Koninklijk Legermuseum shop* – Jubelpark 3 – 1000 Brussel

You can also order the map by post via :

- info@toerismediksmuide.be or call 32 (0)51/51.94.19
- toerisme@ieper.be or call 32 (0)57/22.85.84
- www.ngi.be or mail directly to sales@ngi.be
- K.V.V.L. Jubelpark 3 - 1000 Brussel, WITH a deposit of € 5,75 (port inclusive) on account 310-1060418-03 mentioning : "In Flanders Fields". (NOTE , the amount is for Belgian readers)

Info : Fons Wuyts

(EDITOR'S NOTE : the map is really good, although the scale is too small for such a huge mass of information. Sometimes the icons hide roads on the map that you need for driving)

A new site about Belgian fortifications

Have a look at : <http://www.wiitechpubs.info/bunker/ft-bl/belgian-fortifications-ftr.html>

The author is Bernard Bloock



SUDWALL

The battery of Gruissan

By Jory Sormail

For all people interested in bunkers who are traveling along the coast of the Languedoc, it is interesting to make a small detour to visit the remains of the battery at Pech de Moulins in Gruissan (in the department of l'Aude).

Initially the battery was the 3rd battery HKAR 920, but later on the unit was renamed in 3/1290 HKAR. (*HKAR = Heeres Küsten Artillerie Regiment (Army Coastal Artillery Battalion)*). This position is known as the *Stp Lqm 045 (Stützpunkt Languedoc-Gruppe-Mitte 045)* and has the advantage of being representative of the batteries constructed in that area. Moreover it has been well preserved and has still almost all of its components. You can see the following constructions here :

- 4 gun casemates, *Regelbau* 671 in which were installed four 10.5 cm K 331 (f) guns. The bunkers are a bit covered with earth but still accessible inside,
- 2 SK casemates for a 8 cm gun type FK 30 (t) (SK = *Sonderkonstruktion*),
- 1 Vf fire control post,
- 1 auxiliary observation post for artillery,
- 19 *Wellblech* bunkers linked to each other with trenches which are still visible at some spots,
- 6 Tobruks or MG stands in concrete,
- the remains of barbed wire,



The SK casemate for a 8 cm gun.



One of the 671's for a 10.5 cm gun



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- a basement for the storage of ammunition hewed out in the rock with two concrete entrances. The basement is approximately 200 m long, but is obstructed in the middle. On the other hand it is accessible on both sides. Inside there are ammunition niches, also hewed out in the rock. Take care , during my visit I found an unexploded 8 cm shell. These days the battery lies in the middle of a residential quarter, but the mayor has the site transferred into a botanical garden which protects the bunkers for a while.



The entrance of the basement

Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

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