



WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

SPOTLIGHT ON A MUSEUM

Musée Historique 39-45



This museum is located in Ambleteuse, Pas-de-Calais, France.

It's a very nice museum that brings the history of the second world war to life with models and with uniforms from the Poland campaign through the Blitzkrieg to Russia, the desert, Italy, D-Day to the pacific arena. Big artifacts like a tank are outside.

With regards to fortifications, the museum has a nice collection of navy coastal artillery uniforms. They even reconstructed the living room of a bunker.

Everything is very nicely displayed and it's well worth making a stop to visit it. There's also a shop that sells military artifacts.



The museum is open everyday from the 1st April to the 15th October. Out of season, during the week-end. Closed in December, January and February.

Opening times : 0930 Hr to 1800Hr during the week. Week-end 1000Hr to 1800Hr and in July and August until 1900 Hr.

<http://www.musee3945.com/>

Tel : 33/3.21.87.33.01 Fax 33/3.21.87.35.01

Email : musee.39-45@wanadoo.fr



The museum is just outside Ambleteuse on the D940 to Cap Gris Nez.



BELGIUM

The Antwerpen-Turnhout Stelling at Stabroek

The analysis of a World War I bunker line

Part 2

Frank Philippart

The study area to the west of Fort Stabroek

Now that we know the big picture, we can look more closely into the details of this small area.

Mind that the anti-tank ditch didn't exist in 1917. It was dug out in 1939.

It's interesting to know that this small area is almost still complete after 94 years.

In 1918 German aerial reconnaissance flights were made and Lt Zimmerman took photo's of the whole northern front line.



This is an actual view of the area. The bunkers are indicated with white markings. You'll notice the lonely bunker, the series of bunkers and another lonely bunker more to the bottom of the photo.



WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART



This is an overview of the front line around the fort of Stabroek. You'll notice clearly the trenches with the broken trace. It's a scan from the leaflet "De verzameling Zimmerman (1918)", published by the province of Antwerp.



This is a more detailed view of the frontline to the west of the fort. The photo was taken by Lt Zimmerman on 31 Aug 1918. The original is in the KLM Brussels.



WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

When we put the outline of the trenches over the actual photo then we see this.



The lonely bunker stood in the first line that connected the different Belgian forts and redoubts. The Germans included them in their defence plan. Fort Stabroek formed a hinge to the line of the part that came from Berendrecht and the one that runs to Putte. Behind that front a second line was created at about 150 m from the moat of the fort with a length of about twice the width of the fort. Once passed the fort (direction of Putte) the second line continued but now at only 50 m from the first. Both lines were finished with a “merlon” shape. They were connected to each other with a sap in zigzag shape. In front of the trenches there was a barbed wire obstacle.

To the left of the fort there was a switch line position (Riegelstellung). Given that the fort is a hinge, one could break through the first line coming from Berendrecht and attack the line to Putte in the back. This position started from a sap from the second line. The trenches had also the “merlon” structure, a straight communication trench and also a few straight saps between the communication trench and the first line.

The lonely bunker belongs to a series of six bunkers in the first line of which this one remains. These were four observation bunkers for infantry of type IX (with armoured plate) and type XXII (with observation slit) and two machinegun bunkers that had a flanking function. They covered the barbed wire obstacle in front of the trench. The remaining bunker is a type XXII (nr 13 in the inventory) and guarded a small dirt road where the trench ran over.

Behind the observation bunker lay a series of bunkers that belonged to the switch line. The entrances of the bunkers exited in the trench. All nine bunkers of the switch line still exist. Here are one storage bunker, type II (no 19), five crew bunkers, type VI (no 18, 17, 15, 14, 21) and two machinegun bunkers, type V (no 16, 20). Machinegun bunker 16 covered a salient of the line to



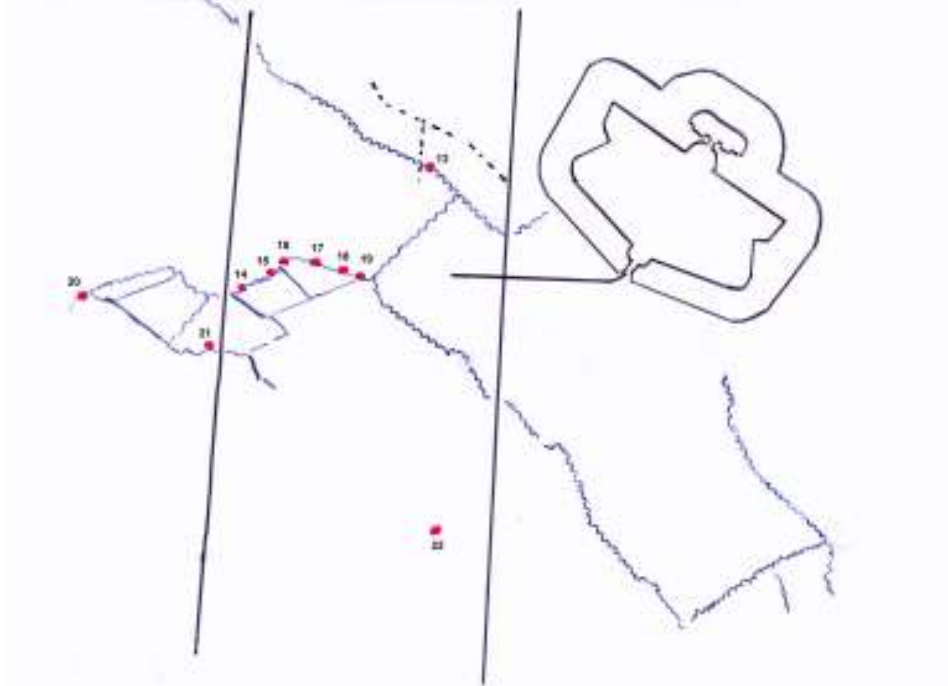
WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

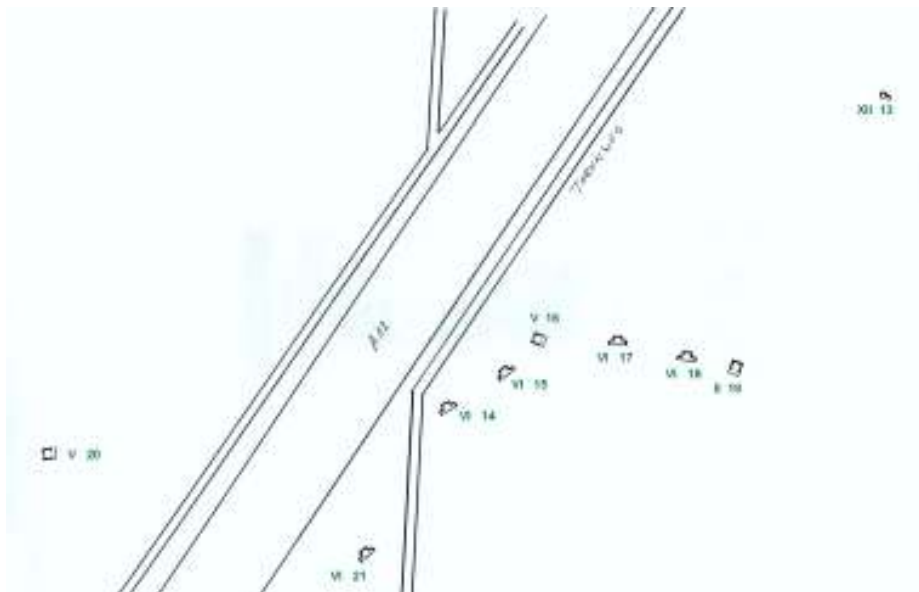
Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

the south-west. Machinegun bunker 20 lay at the end of the switch line and covered the polder towards the Scheldt.

Command bunkers of a higher hierarchical command lay as usual more to the rear. Along the Abtsdreef to Stabroek lies a command bunker type X (no 22).



The outline of the position of 1918 with the remaining bunkers.



Map with the exact location.



WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

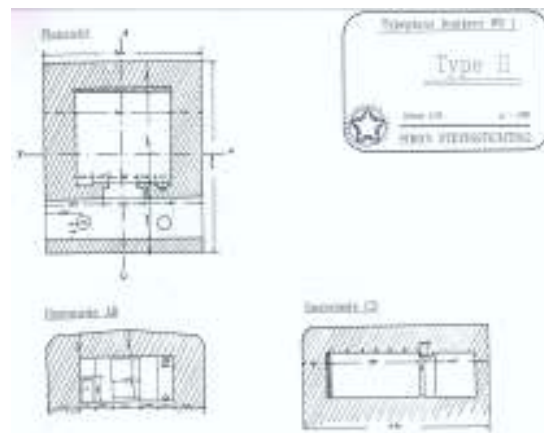
Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Technical records

The bunkers are poured using armoured concrete. Structural shapes and rails were used as armouring. The wall facing the enemy was 1 m or more thicker and on the other sides 50 cm. The thickness of the roof varied from 60 cm to 80 cm. The entrances were closed with wooden twofold doors to avoid the crew becoming trapped if the doors are blocked with debris after a bombardment.

Type II

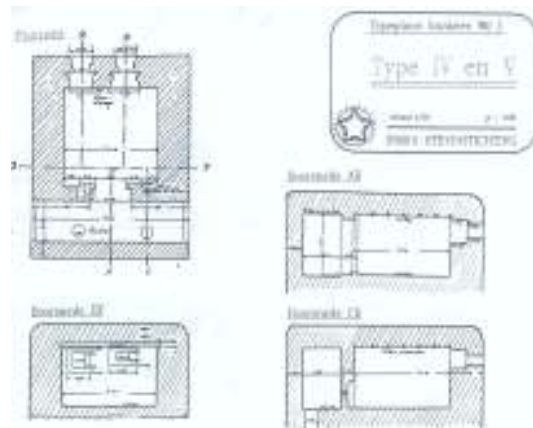
Storage bunker.
German indication : M ("Magazin")
Quantity : 1



Plan number 19.

Type V

Machinegun casemate. There is a loophole for a machinegun and a search light.
German indication : MG ("Machinegewehr")
Quantity : 2



Plan numbers 16 and 20. 16 is closed. The front site shows impacts from World War 2.

20 is closed.





WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

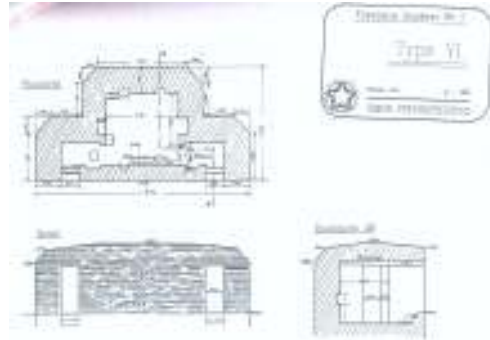
Type VI

Crew bunker for one group. Presence of niches for lamps and rifle racks.

German indication : U ("Unterstand")

Quantity : 4

Plan numbers 18, 17, 15, 14 and 21.



No 14.
Closed.
Facade shows
bullet impact
(ww2)



No 15. Closed.



No 18 Closed

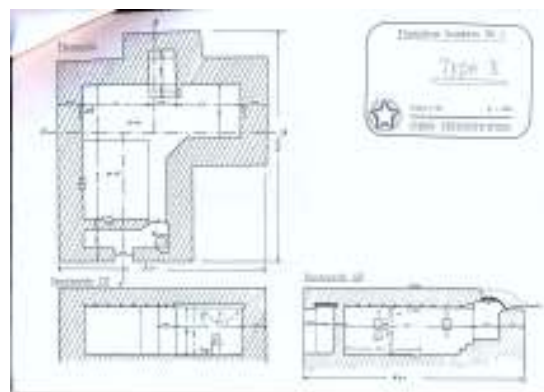
Type X

Command post. Type X has a 4 cm thick half round armoured plate with an observation slit and on top of it a hatch for a periscope.

German indication : CBD, GBF, GBE

Quantity : 1

Address : Abstdreef 145





WMF News

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART



Plan no 22.
This one has the peculiarity of having an extra embrasure on the right side.

Image from 1997.

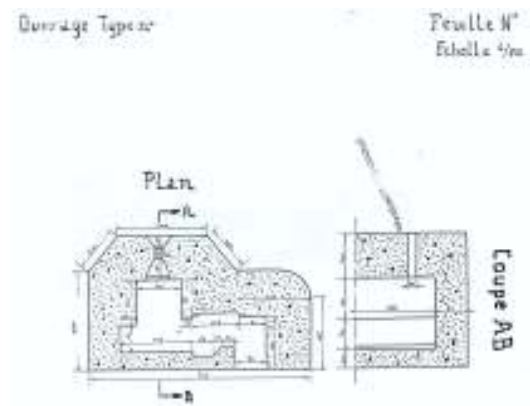
Type XXII

Observation bunker for infantry. Type XXII has a frontal observation slit. Hand guns could also be used here.

German indication : IB (Infanterie Beobachtung)

Quantity : 1

Plan no 13.



This one has a gusset above the entrance where a plate was fixed, probably with the unit number that built the bunker or the unit that occupied the region.





WMF *News*

WMF is a section of the Simon Stevin Centrum
Edition 1 of 2012

Composed by Frank PHILIPPART

Sources :

- article "Deutsche Grenzsicherungen gegenüber Holland im Weltkriege" from E Biermann out of "Vierteljahresheft für Pioniere, nr 2 1937.
- "De Duitse verdedigingsstelling uit 1917 in het noorden van Antwerpen" fom R Gils
- "Duitse bunkers in het Mastenbos" R Gils
- Type plans of the Simon Stevinstichting
- "Plan de situation des abris" from the « Service des bâtiments militaires, direction de la province d'Anvers ».
- Aerial picture of Lt Zimmerman, original in the KLM.
- Leaflet "De verzameling-Zimmerman (1918). Aerial pictures from Beveren to Oud-Turnhout" of the provincie of Antwerp.
- Periodical "Scharnel" of The Western Front Association Belgie. Nr 2 of 30 April 1994. Article : De Hollandstelling van de kust tot Strobrugge, toen en nu" of Alain van Geeteruyen & Guido De Jongh.

Thanks to Yvonne Mayo for the spell check.

=====