

The WW II German *Stützpunkt* on the Menez-Hom (Finistère-FR)

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Abstract

The Menez-Hom hill placed between the Brest harbour and the Douarnenez bay, although only about 350 m height, dominates the surrounding territory. Therefore, during the WW II the German *Wehrmacht* decided to establish on its top a *Stützpunkt* (support point) for controlling and eventually impeding access to the Crozon peninsula to foreign troops. The available literature gives only fragmentary information about it but the mention of a *Gerät* (device—radar?) belonging to the *FuMB686 Wolga* and the presence of rests of a *Seetakt* radar on the Menez-Hom hill at the end of the war make the location of the *Stützpunkt Wolga* at the top of the Menez-Hom hill highly probable. The visit of the *Stützpunkt* site took place on 27/08/2010 and allowed to identify many of its components and to determine its organization.

Keywords

Menez-Hom, *Stützpunkt*, *FuMB*, *Wolga*, Atlantic Wall, Crozon, Finistère

1. Introduction

The Menez-Hom hill placed between the Brest harbour and the Douarnenez bay, although only about 350 m height, dominates the surrounding territory. Therefore, during the WW II the German *Wehrmacht* decided to establish on its top a *Stützpunkt* (support point) for controlling and eventually impeding access to the Crozon peninsula to foreign troops. The available literature gives only fragmentary information about it, but the mention of a *Gerät* (device—radar?) belonging to the *FuMB686 Wolga* (*Funk Mess Beobachtung*—radar observation) and the presence of rests of a *Seetakt* radar on the Menez-Hom hill at the end of the war make the location of the *Stützpunkt Wolga* at the top of the Menez-Hom hill highly probable. The *FuMB686 Wolga* was initially in charge of passive recognition and identification of foe radar emissions and was operated by part of the 31.

Funkmeß Kompanie (Lippmann, 2016) and/or 1. - 3. *Funkmess Abteilung* (Blanchard, 2017).

2. Stützpunkt History

From 20th June to up to August 1944, the 14th PAK *Kompanie* (Unity L33 444) of the 2. *Fallschirm Regiment* (2nd Parachutist Troops Regiment) was quartered in the city of Dinéault for securing the territory around the hill (Floch, 2012).

The *FuMB686 Wolga* and its associated *FuMB445 Donau* (Re 311) at Plumoguer were probably the first two *FuMB* installed in Brittany and remained the only two up to the end of 1943. All the information collected were centralized at *Donau* and directly transmitted to the *Kommandant zur See* in Paris, without passing through the *Kriegsmarine* center in Nostang as the other radar stations, to be diffused, if necessary, on reserved frequencies, to the boat/s concerned and to the *Flotillen* of U-Boats. A *FuMB* net was developed on 1944 comprising up to about thirty stations installed on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. In Brittany, this *FuMB* net comprised, in addition to the two mentioned *FuMB*, also the *FuMBs* of Brignogan, Perros-Guirec, Erquy, Trévignon et Belle Île, all connected by telephone to each other and to the *FuMB* coordination centre in Plumoguer. Naval and air information were signalled by the centre in Plumoguer, respectively to the Nostang and to the chief of the air defense in Rennes-SaintJacques (Blanchard, 2017; Tomezzoli, 2007).

On 3rd August 1944, upon request of the 343. *Infanterie Division*, two *Ein-satzkompanien* (operation companies) of the III. *Marine Flakbrigade* (Marine Antiaircraft Brigade) were available in the area east of the hill for fighting partisans. These companies remained up to 12th August in the areas East and South-East of the hill for monitoring and fighting the partisan activities because agent reports informed about expected, intensified dropping of weapons and sabotage material. On 5th August, the 1. - 3. *Funkmeß-Abteilung* (Radar Section) informed that at 13:20 six Thunderbolts attacked the *Stützpunkt Wolga* with bombs and board weapons. An empty lodgement barrack and a fire water pond were destroyed; an administrative barrack and the *Gerät* (device—radar?) were damaged. The personnel in place were deemed able to fix alone the damages. No personnel member was lost. On 5th August at 20:09 the III. *Marine Flakbrigade* informed that the *Kompanie Schumann* (probably one of the two *Ein-satzkompanien*) was in combat against partisans during its retreating from the area of the hill towards Daoulas. On 13th August at 16:00 requisition troops of *Gerät Wolga* were attacked by partisans: 7 fallen and 2 seriously injured soldiers were deplored. At 16:30 the division (343. *Infanterie Division*?) informed that the line of Menez-Hom was still strongly occupied from the infantry and in all circumstances maintained (BAMA, 1944).

From August 1944, the Menez-Hom district was defended by the 800th North-Caucasian battalion (Floch, 2012).

The US Army joined the FFI around 15th August and attacked the *Stützpunkt*

with infantry, artillery and aviation. By mistake they bombarded to a village 10 km far from the hill causing the death of FFI and American soldiers (Pelosato, 1999).

Dinéault was freed on 31st August 1944 (Floch, 2012). On the same day, the conquest of the *Stützpunkt* was completed. Its surviving defenders retreated for defending the Crozon peninsula, together with the German troops evacuating Brest, up to the final capitulation of general Ramke on 18th September 1944 (Blanchard, 2017).

3. *Stützpunkt* Site

The visit of the *Stützpunkt* site took place on 27/08/2010. It was reached through the access road 1 (Figure 1). The identified components were the following.

An orientation platform 2 (Figure 1 & Figure 2) ($48^{\circ}13'11.13''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'06.62''\text{W}$) formed by a circular, concrete platform about 4 m in diam., 20 cm thick, hosting at the centre a concrete block made by a cylindrical portion with a superimposed four sided square portion having on the top a circular depression several cm deep. Not identifiable in Figure 1, it was not an original *Stützpunkt* component; and was built on 1952 (Blanchard, 2017). The concrete block, although similar to others seen on the site, appears of recent masonry, therefore not a retrieved original *Stützpunkt* component.

A small bunker 3 (Figure 1, Figures 3(a)-(d)) ($48^{\circ}13'12.70''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'07.76''\text{W}$) about 2×2.5 m, buried in the terrain, connected by a labyrinth passage 3m long, flanked by protective walls, to the ruins of an about 4.5 m in diam. circular emplacement. Concrete blocks probably retrieved from a disappeared *Stützpunkt* construction obstructed its passage and entrance, so that the interior inspection was not possible. Its emerging concrete structure was in a good preservation state without damages due to combats or bombardments. On the contrary, the adjacent circular emplacement was completely destroyed and only a damaged portion emerged from the terrain. A small, concrete square pit about 1.5×1.5 m was about 5 m from the circular emplacement, filled by terrain.

The area of a barrack emplacement 4 (Figure 1, Figure 4(a)) ($48^{\circ}13'12.47''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'04.98''\text{W}$) and a circular emplacement 5. Their cavities were completely filled by terrain and vegetation and no longer visible. Only a damaged portion of the cavity concrete wall slightly emerged from the terrain. The cavity dimensions, estimated on the basis of the cavity dimensions of the barrack emplacements 6 - 10 (Figure 1), were about 18×10 m, i.e. slightly bigger than the cavities of said barrack emplacements, the circular emplacement was about 6 - 7 m in diameter.

Several different components on the hill top, comprising: a concrete rectangular block about 20 cm thick, covered by the vegetation (Figure 5(a)); a 2×3 m rectangular support having an L-shaped concrete block at each corner (Figure 5(b)); three antenna anchoring bases (Figures 5(c)-(e)); a damaged concrete wall about 3 m long and 1 m height with a neighbour, reversed, concrete block (Figure 5(f)) ($48^{\circ}13'12.15''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}13'59.50''\text{W}$); a geodetic stone (Figure 5(g))

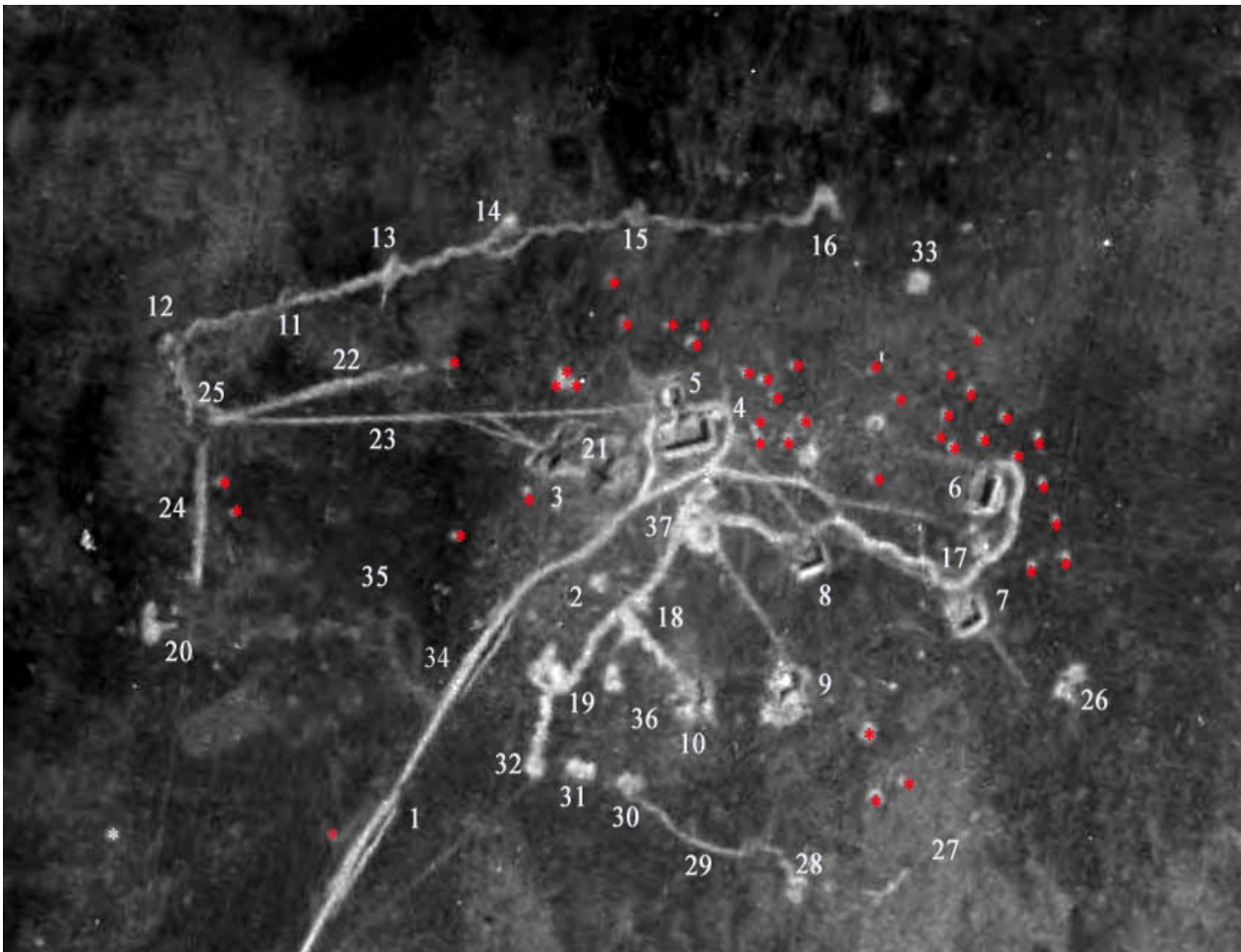


Figure 1. *Stützpunkt* Menez-Hom. 1: access road; 2: area of the orientation platform; 3: small bunker and gun emplacement; 4: barrack emplacement; 5: circular emplacement; 6 - 10: barrack emplacements; 11: pathway or connection trench; 12 - 16: machine gun emplacements; 17 - 19: pathways or connection trenches; 20: gun emplacement with access ramp; 21: underground structure; 22 - 24: pathways or connection trenches; 25: underground structure; 26: double machine gun emplacement; 27: pathway or connection trench; 28: machine gun emplacement; 29: pathway or connection trench; 30 - 33 machine gun emplacements; 34: loop structure; 35: area of a square concrete platform; 36: small bunker; 37: gun emplacement and barrack emplacement; * bomb craters. C3639-0471_1948_MISSIONBRETAGNE6_0029, cliché n°29, échelle: 1/24070, type de cliché: Argentique, date de prise de vue: 16/04/1948.

(48°13'12.10"N, 04°14'02.48"W), certainly not an original *Stützpunkt* component because of the engraved inscription: Station Astronomique du Menez-Hom 1957 on one side and a metallic, oval plate, on the other side, with the inscription: Institut Geographique National-Reseau Geodesique Francais-Ne pas detruire-Art 257 du Code Penal.

A barrack emplacement 6 (**Figure 1**, **Figure 6**) (48°13'11.21"N, 04°13'56.52"W) formed by a cavity about 15 × 10 m. The entrance with a descending stair was on the northern side. The cavity sides were formed by stone bricks, inclined toward the exterior. The cavity was only partially invaded by vegetation so that it was possible to ascertain the absence of ruins of a hosted barrack. At the exterior of the cavity south side were visible the rests of a damaged, rectangular pit.



Figure 2. Menez-Hom hill—orientation platform with concrete block.

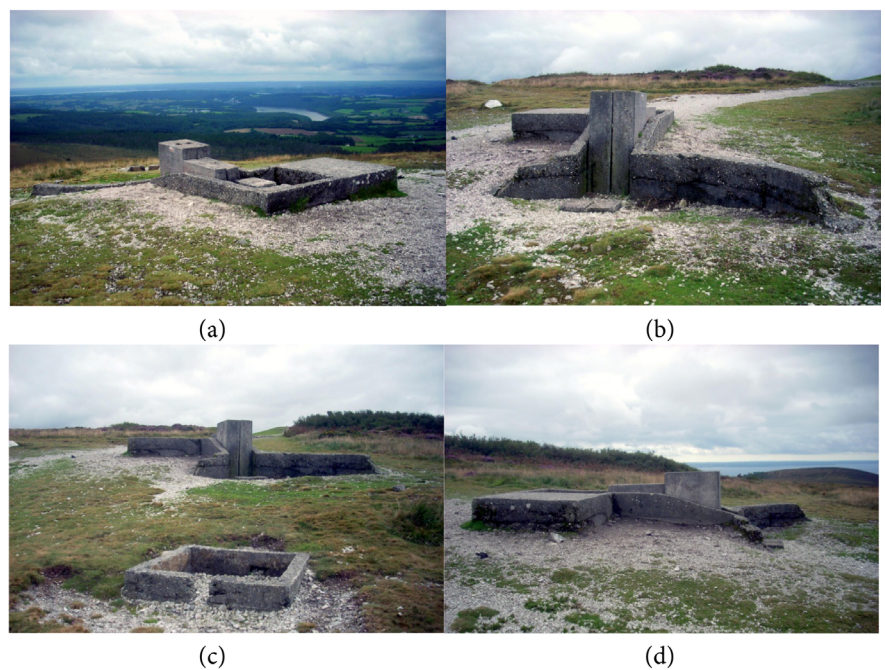


Figure 3. Menez-Hom hill, small bunker and gun emplacement 3—(a) side view, labyrinth passage and bunker entrance, in the foreground the river Aulne; (b) front view, emerging damaged part of the circular gun emplacement and obstructed labyrinth passage; (c) side view with small square pit; (d) rear view with protective wall.

A barrack emplacement 7 (**Figure 1**, **Figure 7**) ($48^{\circ}13'09.24''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}13'56.76''\text{W}$) formed by a cavity about 13×12 m. The descending stair was situated on the northern side. The cavity sides were vertical, formed by stone bricks, with the exception of a concrete portion, hosting a rectangular pit about 2×1.5 m, on the west side. The cavity was completely invaded by vegetation, so that it was not possible to ascertain the presence of ruins of a hosted barrack.

A barrack emplacement 8 (**Figure 1**, **Figure 8**) ($48^{\circ}13'10.03''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'01.05''\text{W}$) formed by a cavity about 14×10 m. The descending stair was situated on the northern side. The vertical, concrete cavity sides were about 0.5 m thick. They were quite well preserved with the exception of the west side in which, for



Figure 4. Menez-Hom, hill top—(a) view of the rests of the barrack emplacement 4; (b) underground structure, in the foreground left the Douarnenez Bay in the foreground right, the Brest harbor.

structural reasons, two breaks, near a square pit about 2×2 m caused the displacement of a side portion. The cavity was completely invaded by vegetation, so that it was not possible to ascertain the presence of ruins of a hosted barrack.

A barrack emplacement 9 (**Figure 1, Figure 9**) ($48^{\circ}13'07.92''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'01.41''\text{W}$) formed by a cavity about 13×10 m. Two concrete, descending stairs were situated on the northern side. The vertical, concrete, cavity sides were about 0.5 m thick. One descending stair, free from vegetation, allowed accessing the cavity, to ascertain the good preservation state of the visible side walls, of the cavity bottom as well and the absence of ruins of a hosted barrack. The vegetation, covering the south side of the emplacement, did not allowed to identify the possible presence of a pit as in barrack emplacements 6 - 8.

A barrack emplacement 10 (**Figure 1, Figure 10**) ($48^{\circ}13'07.94''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'04.03''\text{W}$) formed by a cavity about 14×10 m. The descending stair was situated on the northern side. Vegetation invaded the descending stair, the cavity and its exterior, so that it was not possible to ascertain the presence of ruins of a hosted barrack. Emerging about 2 m above the upper level of the cavity was a concrete, square pit about 2.5×2.5 m. The pit was quite well preserved except for a minor projectile impact damage on one side.

A barrack emplacement 37 (**Figure 1**) ($48^{\circ}13'10.32''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'04.04''\text{W}$) formed by a cavity about 5×10 m. The descending stair, the cavity and the pit, if any,





Figure 5. Menez-Hom, hill top—(a) concrete block covered by the vegetation; (b) concrete blocks of a rectangular support; (c)–(e) antenna anchoring bases; (f) damaged concrete wall and reversed concrete block; (g) geodetic stone, in the foreground the orientation table.

were covered by vegetation and no longer visible. No trace remained visible of a possible nearby gun emplacement ($48^{\circ}13'08.70''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'04.98''\text{W}$) (**Figure 1**).





Figure 6. Menz-Hom hill, barrack emplacement 6—(a) north side entrance and descending stair; (b) south side and cavity invaded by vegetation; (c) cavity invaded by vegetation; (d) possible pit at the exterior of the south side.

A possible underground structure 21 (**Figure 1, Figure 2(b)**) ($48^{\circ}13'07.94''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'04.03''\text{W}$) about 5×10 m covered by terrain and vegetation. Three possible entrances were visible, all obstructed by vegetation; so that the interior was not possible.

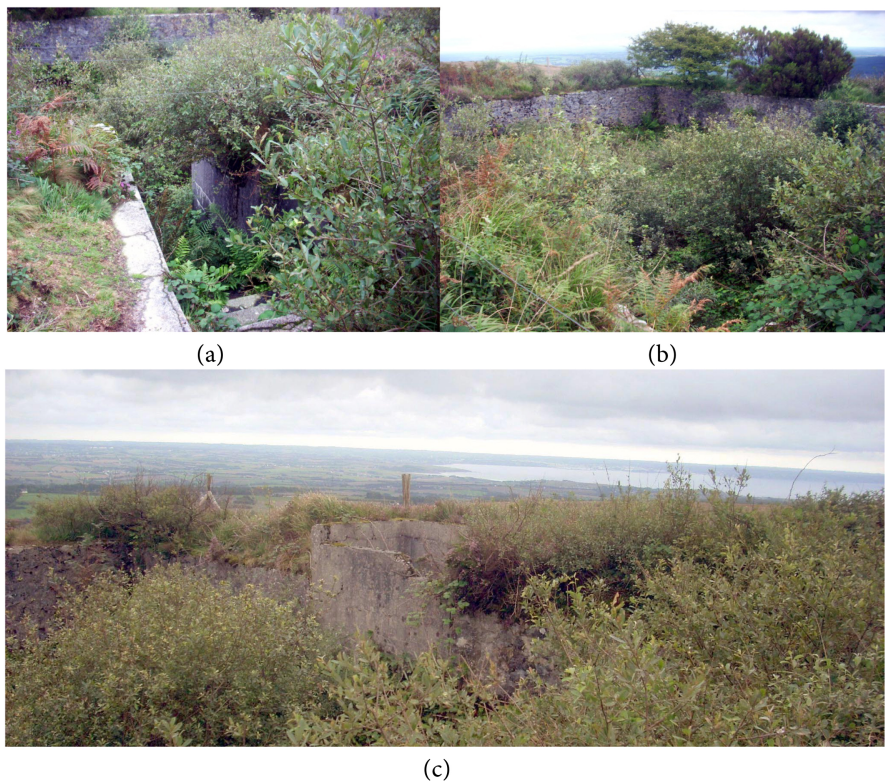


Figure 7. Menez-Hom hill, barrack emplacement 7—(a) descending stair; (b) cavity interior invaded by vegetation; (c) concrete portion with pit at the exterior of the west side.

An underground structure 25 (**Figure 1**) ($48^{\circ}13'11.97''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'16.76''\text{W}$) covered by vegetation. Two square pits indicating possible emergency exits were obstructed by vegetation; so that the interior inspection was not possible.



Figure 8. Menez-Hom hill, barrack emplacement 8—(a) descending stair and cavity invaded by the vegetation; (b) displaced side portion and pit at the exterior of the west side.



Figure 9. Menez-Hom hill, barrack emplacement 9—(a) two descending stairs; (b) unobstructed descending stair and cavity partially invaded by vegetation.



Figure 10. Menez-Hom hill, barrack emplacement 10—(a) descending stair obstructed by the vegetation; (b) projectile impact on the external concrete pit.



Figure 11. Menez-Hom hill, small bunker 36—(a) front view, labyrinth passage with protective walls and bunker entrance; (b) rear view, in the foreground the Douarnenez Bay.

The area of a no longer visible pathways or connection trenches 11, 17 - 19 and emplacements 12 - 16 (**Figure 1**). They were still visible in French air recognition photographs of the years 50s and begin of years 60s (C0319-0051_1952_F0418-0818_0350, n°350, 1/25243, Argentique, 23/05/1952; C0518-0011_1961_F0418-0718_0018, n°18, 1/23911, Argentique, 20/06/1961) but no longer visible in a French air photograph of the mid years 60s (C0518-0021_1966_F0418-0518_0004, n°4, 1/38931, Argentique, 31/05/1966).

A concrete platform 35 (**Figure 1, Figure 11**) ($48^{\circ}13'09.30''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'12.76''\text{W}$) about 10×10 m. It was in a good preservation state with a minor damage due to a structural failure at a corner.

A small bunker 36 (**Figure 1, Figure 12**) ($48^{\circ}13'08.14''\text{N}$, $04^{\circ}14'06.23''\text{W}$) about 2×2.5 m, buried in the terrain, provided with a labyrinth passage 3 m long flanked by protective walls. It was in all similar to the small bunker 3, except for the lack of a connected circular emplacement. The passage and the bunker entrance were obstructed by terrain and vegetation; so that the interior inspection was not possible. Its emerging concrete structure was in a good preservation state without damages due to bombardments and combats.



Figure 12. Menez-Hom hill, concrete platform 35—(a) complete view; (b) side view, cover with damaged corner.

The areas (**Figure 1**) of still discernible on the terrain emplacements 20, 26, 28, of the disappeared pathways or connection trenches 27, 29, of the disappeared emplacements 30 - 33, of a disappeared loop structure 34 and of still discernible on the terrain connection trenches 22 - 24.

Rests of a possible metallic barrier around the hill were not remarked.

4. *Stützpunkt* Organization

The Menez-Hom *Stützpunkt* close defensive perimeter was constituted by the pathway or connection trench 11, the machine gun emplacements 12 - 16, 33, 26, the pathways or connection trenches 27, 29, the machine gun emplacements 20, 28, 30 - 33. The gun emplacements 12 - 16, 33 (**Figure 1**), aligned on the hill north side, ensured close defense against air and land attacks coming from Brest, whereas the machine gun emplacements 26, 28, 30 - 33 (**Figure 1**) ensured close

defense against air and land attacks coming from all other directions. They were probably armed with 20 mm machine guns. The larger gun emplacement 3 and 37 probably hosted a heavier gun like an 88 or 105 mm gun for far air and land defense.

The similar bunkers 3, 36 were too small for hosting a group of gun servants or soldiers, unless provided with underground rooms. The small square, concrete pit near bunker 3 could probably be either an emergency exit or a pit of a water cistern.

A barrack was present in the cavity of each emplacement 4, 6 - 10 and 37 (Richtlinien, 1943). No concrete barrack ruins were evident in the cavities 6 - 10. Probably, they were wooden barracks dismantled after the war (Tomezzoli et al., 2014). The cavities of the barrack emplacements 4, 6 - 10 have similar dimensions; therefore, they hosted barracks of similar or equal dimensions. The kind of barracks hosted in the cavities is unknown. The purpose of each barrack cannot be precisely established. In any case, they hosted the *Stützpunkt Kommandantur* (Headquarter), lodgements for the personnel, a radio station, an armoury and an infirmary. The pit of each barrack emplacements probably stored water, or coal or hosted a machine gun emplacement. The presence of other barracks on the hill, outside said barracks emplacements or in the surrounding cannot be excluded.

The antenna anchoring bases on the hill top indicate that at least one light antenna was mounted there. The barrack at the barrack emplacement 4 hosted the radio and radar stations offices as well as their operators (Richtlinien, 1943). The radars had to be sufficiently spaced from the barrack so as to avoid malaises to the personnel and excessive length of the connection cables (Richtlinien, 1943).

It is possible that after an initial function of passive recognition of foe radar emissions, the *Stützpunkt* coupled also the function of measuring distance and direction of foe planes and ships.

The first function was probably ensured by a device *FuMB 21/27*, which consisted of the receptors *FuMB 21 "Pellworm"* covering a waveband of 136 - 850 MHz (2.20 m - 35 cm) and a *FuMB 27 "Chinesen"* covering a waveband of 2500 - 3750 MHz (12 cm - 8 cm) comprising a large parabolic antenna, a small parabolic antenna and a four dipoles antenna. The instrumentation and the operators were hosted in a cabin similar to those of the radars *Freya* and *Seetakt* (Blanchard, 2017).

The second function was insured by a radar *Seetakt FuMO 2* (Calais B) (*FunkMessOrtung*-location radar) (Blanchard, 2017) a model developed for the *Kriegsmarine*, which indicates that the *FuMB606 Wolga* was operated by the *Kriegsmarine*. It was destroyed during the Menez-Hom combats by two 155C gun projectiles. The antenna support, shaped as a pantograph, allowed folding the antenna during transportation, and two stairs between the two doors of the cabin permitted to the operators to access the antenna on its top. This *Seetakt* was similar to those of the *Kriegsmarine* near the lighthouse on the Pointe du

Raz and on the Pointe Saint-Mathieu (Blanchard, 2017). Radar data were treated on place and communicated through the radio station to the *I479Anton* (48°33'58.48"N, 4°37'15.97"W) for the day and night fighter control of the radar camp of Saint-Pabu (Tomezzoli & Colliou, 2017) and/or to the *I479Antonat* Rennes-Saint Jacques (Haut-Bois, La Morinais) (Tomezzoli, 2007) and there integrated with data arriving from other radar stations (Tomezzoli, 2017).

The location of said radars on the hill is problematic. Published images (Floch & Le Berre, 2001) give the impression that the *Seetakt* was installed on the terrain without protection, but looking to Figure 1 it appears much more logic that it was installed in the circular emplacement 5 which protected its cabin letting only the antenna to emerge outside (Figure 13). After the war, it is possible that the damaged radar structure was extracted from said circular emplacement and for a certain period let near emplacement 5 attending its transport to the demolition. Said published images were made during that period and gave said impression. Other possible locations could be the underground structure 21 (Figure 4(b)) (Blanchard, 2017).

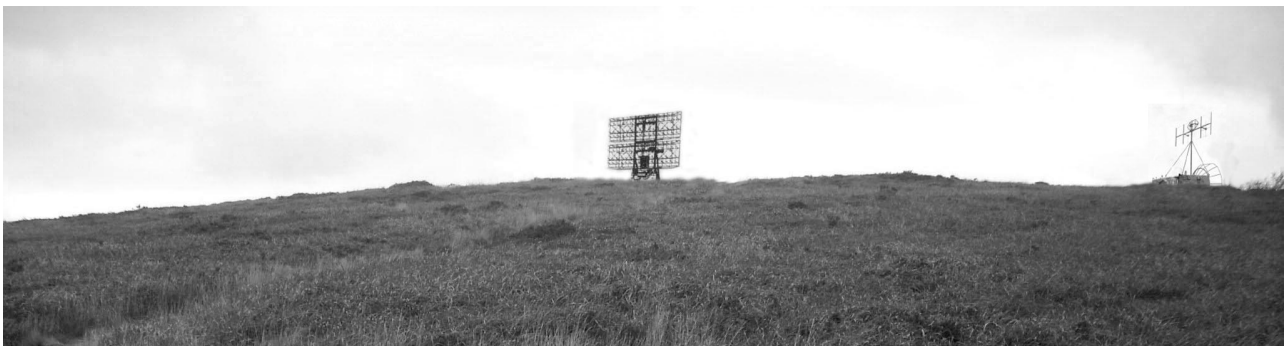


Figure 13. Menez-Hom *Stützpunkt* reconstruction-*SeetaktFuMO2* (Calais B) in the middle, *FuMB 21/27* on the right.

The underground structure 21 was probably a refuge in case of air or land bombardments.

The purpose of the structure 25 is problematic. It was certainly an important component of the *Stützpunkt*, attainable by the connection trenches 22, 24 and directly connected by the straight connection path 23 (cable path?) to the barrack emplacement 4 and the circular emplacement 5 on the hill top. It probably hosted the device *FuMB 21/27* (Blanchard, 2017).

The power supply was insured by a junction with the French high tension net and a transformer was inside the close defense perimeter (Richtlinien, 1943). The amount of power necessary to the *Stützpunkt* is unknown.

A water source or emergency water source was certainly inside the close defense perimeter (Richtlinien, 1943). The presence in the *Stützpunkt* of a possible fire water pond, destroyed by six Thunderbolts with bombs and board weapons, is not surprising because already observed in other German military bases (Tomezzoli et al., 2013; Tomezzoli, 2016; Tomezzoli & Colliou, 2017).

The rectangular support (Figure 5(b)) probably supported a structure of un-

known purpose.

The damaged concrete wall and the reversed, concrete block (**Figure 5(f)**) were part of an unknown construction probably destroyed during the bombardments and combats.

The loop structure 34, connected with the access path 1, was a turnaround path for vehicles allowing easy inversion of the running direction, similar to that of the *S.N.C.F* rail station of Vezot near the ammunition and VI underground store *Murmeltier* of Villaines-La-Carelle (Pays de la Loire-FR) (Tomezzoli & Pottier, 2015).

Mine fields surrounded certainly the hill according to the dispositions of the *Panzerinfanterie* (Richtlinien, 1943).

The platform 35, possible coverage of a buried bunker, is not identifiable in **Figure 1**. It is visible for the first time on an image of the years 60s (C0518-0021_1966_F0418-0518_0004, n°4, 1/38931, Argentique, 31/05/1966), therefore it was not an original *Stützpunkt* component. Its purpose is unknown.

Because of the important position occupied, the *Stützpunkt* was submitted to rude air and land bombardments; up to 43 impact craters were visible on the hill top (**Figure 1**).

The personnel in service at the *Stützpunkt* can be roughly estimated at about 200 - 300 officers and soldiers.

5. Conclusion

The visit of the *Stützpunkt* site and the analysis of French air recognition photographs of the years 40s - 60s helped a lot for understanding its organization. However, further studies appear necessary for clarifying *Stützpunkt* aspects mentioned in this article as probable, unknown and problematic.

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