



Newsletter

Atlantic Wall Platform

The web site keeps growing, albeit partially 'behind the scenes'... Time for a new newsletter. www.atlantikwallplatform.eu is active in three main areas. In the area of fortification engineering with new facts and insights on the Atlantic Wall on both sides of the Dollard; in the realm of landscape and public space with the topic The Atlantic Wall as a water line. You will find articles about both themes in this edition; and in the area of social history with ongoing research on war-time evacuation of civilians along the Dutch coast and the impact on life in the affected communities. More about that in the next issue of the newsletter.

This newsletter features short and long articles about:

- Building for the Germans – an interview with historian Christian Quist about working conditions during the construction of the Atlantic Wall in the Netherlands and Christian's work at the Atlantic Wall museum in Hook of Holland
- Life in the bunker – the drawings of Jet Nijkamp
- The Atlantic Wall as a water line and the water resources agenda for the 21st century – from fresh water to salt water in Delfland
- The Atlantic Wall in Groningen – a new look at the wall on both sides of the Dollard
- The Atlantic Wall on Walcheren: acceptance and resistance - a book report

Building for the Germans interview with Christian Quist

By Ilse Kaldenbach

Christian Quist graduated from the University of Amsterdam in 2009. The focus of his research was building for the Germans (thesis title “Bouwen voor de bezetter”). For the current edition of the Atlantic Wall platform newsletter, Christian talked to us about this emotionally charged topic and about the Atlantic Wall museum in Hook of Holland, where he has been a volunteer for years.

How did you come to pick this subject for your thesis?

Christian responds immediately: “I’ve been working for the Atlantic Wall museum in Hook of Holland ever since I was nine years old.” Christian has found that the historical literature does not contain much information about socio-economic aspects of the Atlantic Wall. This, combined with his interest in architecture, made the subject a logical choice.

What do you know about the number of laborers?

Christian says that there are no hard numbers for forced labor. “It was not accurately recorded; I do know that within a few months of the onset of hostilities, the Germans had upwards of 20,000 laborers in various countries.”

Were all the Dutch working on the Atlantic Wall forced to do so?

Christian tells us that during the first few years, many volunteered to work for the Germans. At this time, it was called ‘strengthening the coastal defenses’, not ‘building the Atlantic Wall’. This changed in 1942, when work on the wall became mandatory. Later still, the Germans announced a complete national building stop and only permitted construction that was Atlantic Wall related. I asked Christian how the Dutch responded to assignment to this kind of work. He replied without hesitation: “They were very willing. When faced with the choice of working along the

Atlantic Wall Museum

The Atlantic Wall Museum in Hook of Holland which is now headquartered in the ‘table bunker’.



AtlantikWall

PLATFORM

Dutch coast, with virtually no danger of getting bombed, and it meant that you would not be sent to a munitions factory in the Ruhrgebiet, which was a prime target for bombing, then it wasn't such a difficult decision."

What were labor conditions like on the coast?

"On the whole, the conditions were surprisingly good, although some abuses did occur. There were occasional staff parties, sometimes the Germans handed out Christmas baskets with Schnapps." When asked about wages, Christian surprises me by saying that workers were paid normally. In addition, depending on where they lived, employees had the option of living at home or moving into Organisation Todt barracks on the coast. People commuting from home received a daily travel allowance. If you lived on-site, the cost of room and board was deducted from your wages.

You told me earlier that you are a long time volunteer at the Atlantic Wall Museum. What type of work do you do?

"I'm more or less of part of the inventory; I do pretty much anything for the museum; I manage the collection, work as a guide, write texts and so on." Christian is proud to announce that the museum is at present undergoing a metamorphosis. Together with his father, Cor Quist, who heads the group of museum volunteers, and many others, he is hard at work to professionalize the operations. "We



have been collecting original artifacts and have just started to furnish the bunker. I'm also writing the labels for the new exhibit. We are set to reopen in the summer."

The Bunker Bandit

Towards the end of our conversation, Christian asks if I have heard of the 'Bunker Bandit' or *Bunkerboef* in Dutch, who has been active in Hook of Holland. He explains that in 2009, a group of kids discovered an excavated bunker in the dunes in Hook of Holland. The Rotterdam police had no idea what was going on. Curiously, the bandit had installed doors and operating windows in the bunker and he had put up walls. Very worrisome were the exterior booby traps to keep interlopers at bay. "There was a concealed hole covered with a board. Step on the board and it would break and you'd fall into nails fixed inside. Just imagine!" After the police had closed off the bunker, the Bunker Bandit simply started excavating a new one. After years of observation, the 47-year-old bandit

"I'm more or less of part of the inventory; I do pretty much anything for the museum; I manage the collection, work as a guide, write texts and so on."

was apprehended earlier this year. He was taken to court and eventually acquitted – all he wanted was peace and quiet.

For more information on the reopening of the Atlantic Wall Museum in Hook of Holland, please keep an eye on the web site: www.atlantikwall-museum.nl.



“In de bunkers smelten heden en verleden op een merkwaardige manier samen. Waar ooit soldaten leefden, hebben na de oorlog mensen gewoon, vakantie gehouden, rondgehangen, feestjes gevierd, muziek gemaakt...”



Bunker life

bunker art by Jet Nijkamp

By Ilse Kaldenbach

Not only historians are fascinated by the Atlantic Wall, witness the exhibits of Amsterdam sketch artist Jet Nijkamp. Nijkamp is inspired by the remnants of the Atlantic Wall in the Dutch dunes and her work was shown at an acclaimed exhibition called “Bunkerleven” [bunker life] at Retort Arts Space in Amsterdam this past spring.

Jet Nijkamp on the topic of bunkers:
Past and present curiously melt into one inside the bunkers. Once a place where soldiers lived, the bunkers were later used as a residence, to hang out, to vacation and as a venue for merriment and music.... The walls, especially the interior ones, testify to this mixed use: emotionally charged texts, drawings and graffiti, safely concealed from the outside world, in the dark under many feet of concrete. Nazi propaganda, intimate confessions or the coarse utterings of a contemporary passer-by – the bunker walls form a secret, secluded world of thought about war, love, desire, sex, transience and death.

Many bunkers are currently being excavated. Sometimes they are refurbished to serve as a museum or a vacation cabin. This development threatens to destroy part of their unique interior world. Artist Jet Nijkamp thinks it's time to document and study the bunker world, to ponder what we would confide to a bunker wall; what is our secret language, today's language, ... what are the thoughts, desires and freedoms that matter and move us?

Curious about Jet Nijkamp's work? The Atlantic Wall Museum in Noordwijk is currently hosting a small show of her bunker drawings. The exhibit runs through September and the museum will be open on Open Monumentendag [open monument day].

[Atlantikwall Museum Noordwijk](#), Bosweg 15, Noordwijk aan Zee.

For more information, please see the artist's web site at www.jetnijkamp.nl.

The Atlantic Wall as a water line and the water resources agenda for the 21st century Delfland: from fresh water to salt water?

By Steven van Schuppen

The Atlantic Wall as a water line? What did those German bunkers along the Dutch coast have to do with a water line, such a quintessentially Dutch type of fortification? More than you'd think. The Atlantic Wall needed rear cover on the land side and the German forces fell back on an age-old Dutch principle, that of the water line. Up until mere months before the liberation, from Zelandic Flanders in the south to Groningen in the north, water was put to military use. The consequences during the post-war years for the landscape and the population have been far-reaching, with long term after effects on water resources management, spatial planning and land development.

In the Netherlands, fortification engineering and civil or water resources engineering have traditionally been interconnected and no-one better personifies this tradition than Kraijenhoff [1758-1840], the architect of the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie and other water works. Continuing in this tradition, the companies **Lopende Zaken** [www.lopendezaken.eu] and **Nienhuis Landschap** [www.nienhuislandschap.nl] have researched the relevance of war-related inundations for present and future water management and urban development problems. The focus of attention is on The Hague and its southern environs in the direction of Rotterdam. It is a strongly urbanized region that has the highest percentage of paved surface in the country. This is the result of not only *the stone city*, but also of *a glass city* – the extended

greenhouse industry in the Westland. The future will require us to deal with increasing water volume fluctuations. These anticipated highs and lows will require additional storage capacity; not only in times of flooding but also in times of drought, particularly in view of steady salinization caused by rising sea levels. Areas that were inundated during the war can play a role as water storage basins in the future. The zone flanking the river Zweth, on the border of the Westland and Midden Delfland, is a case in point. During droughts, treated wastewater from sewage treatment plants can be used for agriculture and floriculture in the Westland and for the new concept of 'stadslandbouw': city agriculture.

The study was carried out by Arjan Nienhuis of Bureau Nienhuis Landschap and by Steven van Schuppen of Bureau Lopende Zaken. Their aim is to conduct follow-up studies in collaboration with government and civic organizations active in the Rotterdam-The Hague metropolitan area. Lopende Zaken and Nienhuis Landschap have created and launched the international website www.atlantikwallplatform.eu. This site strives to inform not only about fortification construction but also about the impact of Atlantic Wall fortifications on landscape and society. The fortification elements of the Dutch section of the wall have now been mapped. More in-depth research on social, historical, spatial and urban planning effects is scheduled.

Research into *The Atlantic Wall as a water line* has been made possible in part by financial support from the Stimuleringsfonds voor Architectuur [Architecture Stimulation Fund] under the Belvedere grant.

AtlantikWall

PLATFORM



"The most revolutionary it might still be the driving battery. These batteries were placed on Siebelfähren. "



The Atlantic Wall in Groningen

a new look at the wall on both sides of the Dollard

By Paul Dijkstra

Should the bunkers in the province of Groningen, in particular those in the vicinity of Delfzijl, be considered part of the Atlantic Wall? That was a big unanswered question when the Atlantic Wall platform was being set up. Dutch Atlantic Wall expert Rudi Rolf thinks they should. The maps in his books show meticulously drawn batteries in the *Deutsche Bucht*, as well as batteries on German soil.

Arjan Nienhuis and I were invited to the December 2, 2010, *Waddengescht* conference in Harlingen, organized to bring interested parties together and to inventory what local and provincial authorities are doing with the bunkers in their area. I presented the Platform and Arjan talked about the web site, its concepts, setup and structure. The town of Delfzijl was singled out because of an older issue of the magazine *Noorderbreedte*, which we had received that morning.

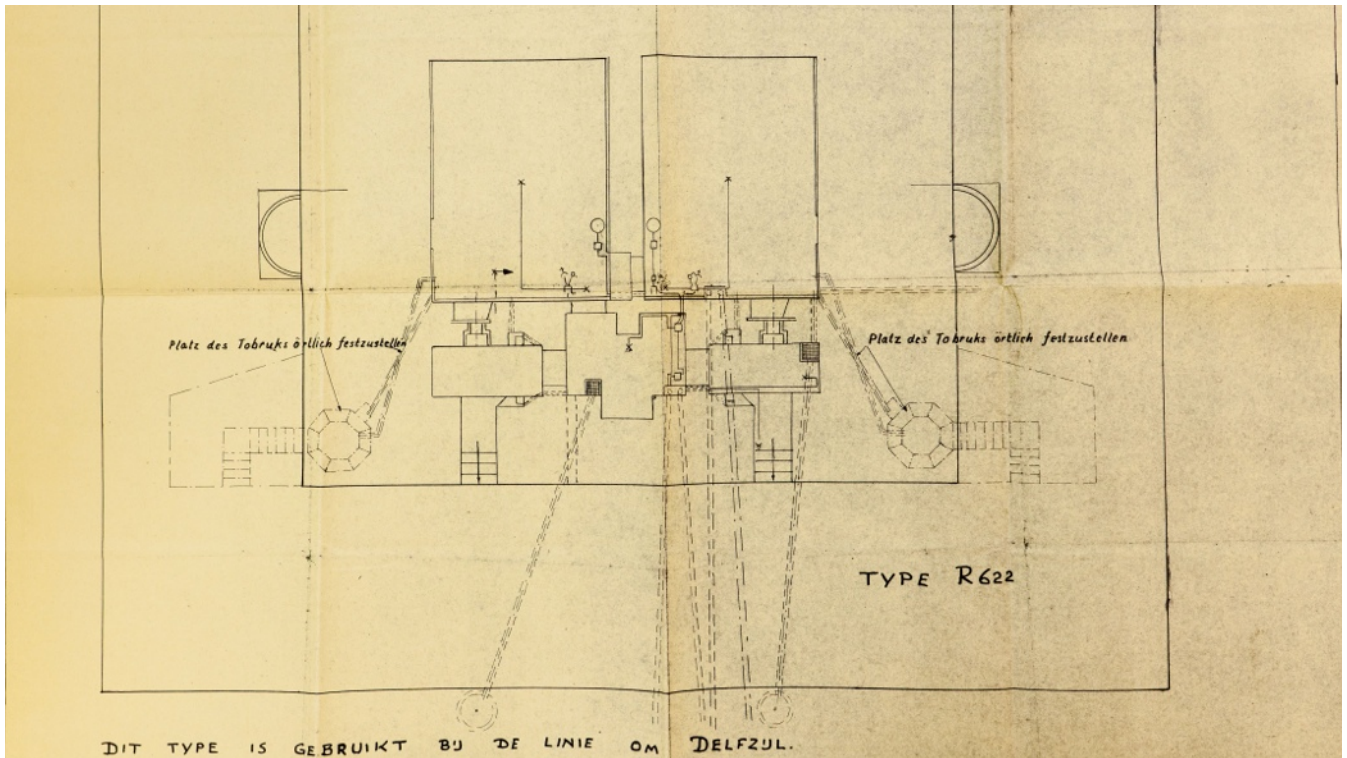
In addition, my talk covered several bunker complexes in Friesland and Groningen, in

particular, around Delfzijl. The audience included experts and officials from the province of Groningen such as historian Franz Lenselink, who wrote his dissertation on *Marineflakabteilung 256* and authored a booklet about wartime Delfzijl. Lenselink questioned why we had included Delfzijl in the Platform. As he put it: "The entrances to the bunkers faced the sea; the batteries were only for anti-air defense. In other words, the entire *Deutsche Bucht* from Delfzijl to Denmark was not part of the Atlantic Wall".

After my presentation we continued our discussion. I started searching for arguments in favor of and against Delfzijl being part of the Atlantic Wall, and evidence of a defensive role for *Stützpunktgruppe Delfzijl*. I soon stumbled upon a late volume of the war diary of a German officer, the *Kriegstagebuch* of *Seekommandant Ost-Friesland 3*. This commander was in charge of *Festung Emden* and the *Deutsche Bucht* during the last months of the war. This was a big relief; at least I had in hand a primary source on German activities in and around Delfzijl.

AtlantikWall

PLATFORM



Type R622 A by the opposition captured German map of a 622 Doppelgruppenunterstand as built in Delfzijl (by P. de Krom, source: National Archives).

Bunker construction and the Atlantic Wall

Another remarkable resource I discovered, the *Baufortschrittsmeldung*⁴ [work progress note] for the Delfzijl area, contained information about the construction period of the Delfzijl bunkers. I was surprised to learn that the Germans continued to build bunkers until November of 1944, despite the fact that the wall had been breached months before, on June 6th: the aforementioned war diary indicated that six type 622 bunkers and one type M172 bunker for *Festung Emden* had been scheduled. The diary also talked of the January 1945 completion date of the fire

control post for *Schwere Flakbatterie* [heavy air defense battery] *Nansum*. This was ridiculously late; less than 6 months later this part of the Netherlands would be free.

While no proof that the battery was part of the Atlantic Wall, it was interesting that bunkers were being planned as late as January 1945. I needed to know more about building plans for the western Atlantic Wall. In March of 1942, Adolf Hitler attended a meeting about the reinforcement of the Western European coast. This resulted in a March 23, 1942 document named *Führerweisung 40*, in which reinforcement instructions were spelled out. The *Kriegstagebuch*

or war diary of the 88th army corps testifies to the fact that building activity in the western Netherlands proceeded strictly according to these instructions: the *Kriegstagebuch* of *Seekommandant Ost-Friesland* refers specifically to *Führerweisung 40* – diary entry of 13 November – “*Küstenverteidigung im Sinne Führerweisung 40*” [coastal defenses as specified in *Führerweisung 40*]. The diary also describes the required activities. In summary, I conclude that the bunkers in the Delfzijl area were built under the same master plan as the rest of the wall in the western Netherlands.

AtlantikWall

PLATFORM

Living with water

Water has always played a major role in the defense of the Netherlands. The Germans made extensive use of the existing Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie or New Dutch Waterline. All through the country areas where slated to be inundated or had been inundated already. The city of Groningen was no exception. According to Rudi Rolf, the bunkers in the area belonged to the *Seelöwe* complex. It consisted of a series of defense works, connected by anti-tank walls, anti-tank ditches, barbed wire fences and *Tobruks*. Remnants of these works are still visible in a Groningen city park and on the site of the former sugar factory at Hoogkerk. One of the inundated areas was between the Kardinge district of Groningen and Delfzijl. The order to flood had been given at the end of the war by the *Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber in den Niederlanden*, the German commander in the Netherlands. The command over the land between Delfzijl and Groningen was alternately in the hands of commanders located on Dutch and on German soil. The *Küstenbefehlshaber in der Deutschen Bucht* is known to have been upset by the Delfzijl inundations because they disrupted his own bunker building program. But he was forced to do the best he could.

The *Kriegstagebuch* also reveals that water was always a problem. The air defense works were built on top of the dike to keep them dry and bunkers were built above grade on a foundation of wooden piles.

Seezielbatterien and Schwere Flakbatterien

One of the reasons Lenselink feels Delfzijl was not part of the Atlantic Wall, is the absence of coastal batteries or *Seezielbatterien*⁸. This is a valid argument. The bunkers that still exist in places like Termunten show the layout typical of a *Schwere Flakbatterie* or heavy air defense battery. They were built in sites where defense of a large area was possible, with a 360° field of fire. In other words, they were capable of covering both the coast and the hinterland up to the river Eems. The

Germans compensated for the absence of coastal batteries in several ways. The standard layout of *Seeziel* batteries would be modified with quick, easily implementable fixes. The most revolutionary adaptation may well have been the use of floating batteries. These leftovers from Germany's failed attempt to invade the United Kingdom – *Operation Seelöwe* – were batteries placed on ferries or *Siebelfähren*¹⁰. *Siebelfähren* were actually landing craft fitted with anti-aircraft artillery. In November 1944, a number of these vessels were anchored in the Eems between Termunten and Delfzijl and used as *Flak batteries*.

Why keep on building?

One question remains: why did the Germans continue their Atlantic Wall building program until the very end of the war? We support the view that *Stützpunktgruppe Delfzijl* was part of the Atlantic Wall and important for the rear defense of *fortress Emden* and we offer several explanations.

Discussions recorded in the 88th army corps war diary indicate that the German high command had given up on the western Atlantic Wall and that orders had gone out to destroy elements of the defensive infrastructure in several port towns. But not all Germans seemed willing to give up the wall. In fact, the diary of *Seekommandant Ost-Friesland* makes reference to a new defense line to be built right along the Dutch border. This plan bears resemblance to the *Westwall* and the *Maginot Line*. Other fairly advanced plans existed for so-called *A* and *B-linien* near the fortresses in Emden and Wilhelmshaven. Other sources talk of changing the course of the *Hauptkampflinie* (*Main Defense Line*), whereby *Stützpunktgruppe Delfzijl* would become part of the land front and provide rear cover for *Festung Emden* on the inland side.

All the Delfzijl area bunkers are listed in a 1944 version of the *Kriegsmarine's Typenheft*, an inventory of German bunker designs. As described in Rolf's thesis about German fortification types [*Het Duitse fortificatie-ontwerp*], the bunkers built

AtlantikWall

PLATFORM

in Delfzijl were all recent designs 11. The 1944 issue of the *Typenheft* also contains examples of *Behelfsbau*, or makeshift solutions, which could be built quickly. *Stützpunktgruppe Delfzijl* had provisions for such quick fixes and the battery at Termunten still contains remnants of a temporary emplacement or *Behelfsbettung*.

Construction of the Delfzijl bunkers proceeded rapidly in spite of various setbacks including a shortage of building supplies, and widespread inundations. Proof that belief in the Atlantic Wall in the west of the Netherlands had essentially been given up, was an announcement on 9 September 1944 that construction of the IJmuiden *Schnellbootbunker II* (see *Festung IJmuiden* on this web site; detail map oud-IJmuiden) was to be suspended. Reports soon thereafter told of concrete mixers and other equipment being shipped to Germany, possibly also to be put in use for bunker construction in Delfzijl.

Taking a closer look at the Delfzijl bunkers, we discover practical solutions to the problems posed by the shortages. The type *FL317* ammunition bunker in the *Schwere Flakbatterie Termunten* had a huge concrete slab foundation

because a regular base would have required too much time and material. In the *Schwere Flakbatterie Nansum*, the steel reinforcements lining the interior roof are quite thin. Only the important ammunitions stores were fitted with steel plate; the entrances had to make do with galvanized, corrugated iron.

In hindsight

Work on the Atlantic Wall towards the end of the war was swift and efficient. The wall might have been penetrated in the west, that did not mean the Germans would have to give up north eastern Groningen.

Everything seems to indicate that the Nazis believed they would be able to defend their German soil. Many elderly locals wonder whether the Allies would have been able to advance north past the heavily fortified province of Groningen. What we can say, is that the Delfzijl bunkers were part of the Atlantic Wall and that the occupying forces in the Netherlands worked on strengthening and expanding this defensive line until the very end.



"However, the construction of the bunkers at Delfzijl, despite setbacks such as flooding by inundation, fairly quickly."



Acceptance and resistance the Atlantic Wall on Walcheren

By Steven van Schuppen

In his 2009 book on Calvinism and politics, theologian and literature scholar Ernst van den Hemel emphasizes the tension Calvinists in politics perceive between acceptance and resistance. This acceptance is rooted in the famous bible passage in Paul's letter to the Romans [13:1]. **Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.** However, resistance to authority is justified when those authorities abuse their power. And one of these abuses is the violation of the sphere sovereignty (Dutch: *souvereiniteit in eigen kring*) a key concept of the Calvinist teachings. In one of the chapters, Van den Hemel discusses the effects of this dilemma during the German occupation in the Second World War. Two denominations, the fundamentalist members of the 'Hervormde Kerk [Dutch reformed Church]' and the orthodox protestant 'Gereformeerde Gemeente' [Reformed Churches in the Netherlands] – often referred to as black-stocking churches because of their traditionalism – tended to accept German occupation. The members of these churches often felt politically at home in the fundamentalist SGP party. Resistance to Nazi occupation was more widespread among members of the 'Gereformeerde Kerk', a church with great degree of social engagement and a strong commitment to the "sphere sovereignty" in the tradition of Dutch statesman Abraham Kuyper, the foreman of the Antirevolutionary Party.

The way this tension could play out locally was examined by J. Kramer-Vreugdenhil in her 2001 dissertation "*Eilandbewoners. Bezetting en inundatie in drie Walcherse dorpen*" [Islanders – Occupation and inundation in three Walcheren villages]. The chapter on fortress Walcheren (*De vesting Walcheren 1942-1944*) is particularly relevant in this regard.

Noteworthy is the story of the son of SGP mayor Kodde of Zoutelande, who spied on the fortifications between Zoutelande and Westkapelle [see www.atlantikwallplatform.eu/ Verdedigingsbereich Vlissingen - Stützpunktgruppe Breskens / detail map Westkapelle] and passed the information on to resistance group Albrecht. This group was in the business of collecting military intelligence, which was then forwarded to London. The younger Kodde was an official with the water board and his position gave him access to the restricted dune terrain where the bunkers were located. The senior Kodde was an elder in the 'Gereformeerde Gemeente' of neighboring Meliskerke. Orthodox protestant members of the resistance... it actually became more common as war dragged on, because the Hand of God was also recognized in allied successes on the front.

To work

The construction of the Atlantic Wall greatly disrupted everyday life in the inwardly oriented communities on Walcheren. It was still an island in many ways in spite of the dike which connected it to the mainland. In the summer of 1942, over ten thousand troops were stationed on the island to begin work on the Atlantic Wall and about the same number of locals – one sixth of the total population – was evacuated. Many relocated to Roman Catholic Noord-Brabant, almost a foreign country to the orthodox protestant Calvinists of Walcheren. The soldiers and laborers who moved in to work on the Wall were not all Germans. In the summer of 1943, part of the original work force was withdrawn and replaced by men of other nationalities, such as the Moroccan prisoners of war from the French army, who were sent to Meliskerke. A group of Italian 'volunteers' or *Hilfswilligen [Hiwis]* was stationed in Aagtekerke. Starting in 1942, the Germans

began to actively recruit from the local population for work on the wall. For many, accepting Atlantic Wall duty meant avoidance of the *Arbeitseinsatz* in Germany. Nowhere in Europe were Nazi orders followed as diligently as in the Netherlands and the Dutch construction sector outdid most other sectors. After the Germans had decided on building the Atlantic Wall, all other construction projects, including housing and highways, were suspended. Work on the A12, the motorway between Utrecht and the German border, was halted immediately. Local contractors saw orders for bunkers as a welcome supplement to their income, which had dropped considerably with the decline in residential construction. In the fall of 1943, Walcheren contractors were faced with a labor shortage. It was resolved with a so-called *Gemeinde-Aktion*: the mayor selected villagers to work for the Germans and he organized their pay. The *Ocker-Aktion* in the spring of 1944 also recruited local, temporary labor. All adults – women included – had to be available, not to build bunkers but to install obstacles known as *Rommel-asparagus*. The meadows and fields in rear of the wall were ‘planted’ with wooden stakes tied together with wires to prevent the landing of allied aircraft. In the villages of Meliskerke, Aagtekerke and Grijskerke – the main focus of the study above – the number of people employed by the Germans came to about one sixth of the entire population: contractors building the wall, locals recruited under the *Gemeinde-Aktion* and the *Ocker-Aktion*, and farmers hired to transport materials.

Under water

The next chapter in Vreugdenhil’s monograph about Walcheren deals with the inundation of the island caused by allied bombing of key sections of the sea wall in the fall of 1944. The rural population withdrew to a thin strip of land along the coast and to higher elevation villages on sandy ridges. Initially, food for man and beast was still abundant in the barns and farms, and there was enough water in rain barrels and

German water tanks, for fall was a wet season. For spiritual sustenance, the villagers were sometimes forced into interprotestant ecumenism; some even organized joint services. The often medieval places of worship of the ‘Hervormde Kerk’, traditionally built on higher ground in the center of the village, were often safe from the rising waters, but the churches of the ‘Gereformeerde Kerk’ frequently flooded and suffered substantial damage.

After the liberation, a large part of the rural population (about 6600 people) was evacuated from Walcheren to Zuid-Beveland under strenuous protest because they wanted to stay in their own villages. Those who did stay managed thanks to regular ferry services to Middelburg and despite extremely high spring tides. Land reclamation was not possible until all of the Netherlands had been liberated. The Walcheren sea wall required extensive repairs. December 1945 marked the start of the sinking of caissons in the breach at Fort Rammekens near Vlissingen, the last major defect (see [www.atlantikwallplatform.eu / Verdedigingsbereik Vlissingen - Stuizpuntgroep Breskens/ detail map Rammekens](http://www.atlantikwallplatform.eu/Verdedigingsbereik_Vlissingen_-_Stuizpuntgroep_Breskens/detail_map_Rammekens)). Subsequent rigorous land redistribution [Dutch: *herverkaveling*] of farm land modernized every aspect of (agri)cultural and social life on the island. The destruction and post-war reconstruction brought swift and far-reaching changes not only to Walcheren but also to the rest of the hitherto isolated province of Zeeland, even before the catastrophic flood of 1953.

Emancipation

These rapid social changes, the onset of which occurred during the war, could be characterized as the emancipation of Zeeland. Initially, the German occupation did not significantly alter the daily life of ordinary people. This changed in mid 1942 when construction of the Atlantic Wall resulted in the influx of additional troops and *Hilfswilligen*, and the departure of the indigenous population. Mounting

AtlantikWall

PLATFORM

repression and injustice during this period, combined with allied military successes, undermined respect for German as well as local Dutch authorities. The inundations created a power vacuum in which not only the old elite took the initiative but also newcomers such as the local preacher, the pub owner or the fire chief. Of course, it was not just land redistribution that brought about the modernization of post-war Zeeland, it was also an overall change in attitude. The powers that be were no longer regarded as sacred or immutable, interpersonal relations became less formal, traditional costumes went out of favor, the position of the worker in the labor market improved. But in local Walcheren politics the farmers continued to call the shots. The political changes were not so evident on the surface but the underlying mental landscape had started to evolve. The conservative Christian political parties returned to their prewar robustness, in spite of the advent of several socialist preachers in the "Hervormde Kerk". On the island of Schouwen-Duiveland, which was less orthodox, the socialist party PvdA grew more rapidly than elsewhere in Zeeland.

As part of the expansion of the www.atlantikwallplatform.eu we are working on the project *De Grote Volksverhuizing* [The Big Migration] with research into the evacuations brought about by the Atlantic Wall and military inundations. Where did the evacuees end up? How did they integrate into their host communities? One of the areas of study is the island of Schouwen-Duiveland. The local population was forced to move to the mainland of southern Zuid-Holland and western Noord-Brabant. Can comparisons be drawn between this situation and the one on Walcheren? If so, which?

To Ernst van den Hemel the emancipatory potential of Calvinism is rooted in the tension between resistance and acceptance. Monographs such as Ms. Kramer-Vreugdenhil's local study can serve as specific examples of this process. The universal basis underlying the ethics of resistance to authority is independent of any political ideology or specific set of values. Rather it is a moral attitude that manifests itself when presented with concrete circumstances. The concept was developed by French Marxist

Aerial photograph

An aerial view of the dijkgat at Fort Rammekens [Wageningen UR Library Special Collections]



AtlantikWall

PLATFORM

NEWSLETTER ATLANTIKWALL PLATFORM august 2012

philosopher Badiou in his book about... indeed, the apostle Paul.

References

=Ernst van den Hemel, *Calvinisme en politiek - Tussen verzet en berusting* Amsterdam [Uitg. Boom - nog leverbaar] 2009

=J. Kramer-Vreugdenhil, *Eilandbewoners - Bezetting en inundatie in drie Walcherse dorpen - Aagtekerke, Grijpskerke, Meliskerke 1918-1950* Waalre [uitgegeven in eigen beheer; proefschrift aan de VU] 2001

=J. Kramer-Vreugdenhil, *Emancipatie op het platteland vlak voor de jaren vijftig - het geval Walcheren* in: J.P. Zwemer [red.], *Zeeland 1950-1965* Vlissingen [Uitg. Den Boer/ De Ruiters] 2005



IN THE NEXT ATLANTIKWALL PLATFORM
NEWSLETTER

- > The Big Migration
- > Schiermonnikoog - Bunkermuseum Schlei
- > Location Cap Gris Nez and St. Valéry: Heinrich Böll, soldier on the Atlantic Wall