

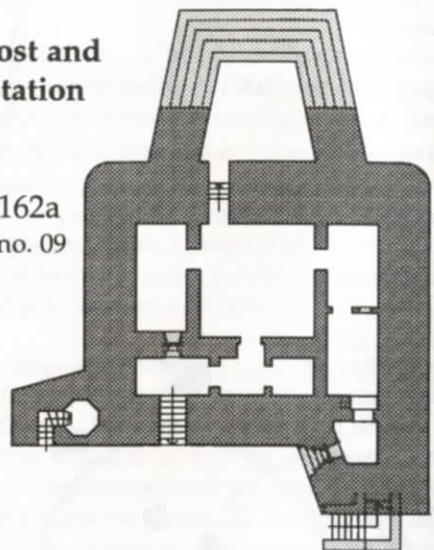
Plans of the buildings that are explained in particular detail on the route through the 'Hanstholm I' battery. Apart from the machinery room, they are all examples of the kind of standardised building types used in the construction of the 'Atlantic Wall'.

The scale is 1:300, which means that 1cm is the equivalent of 3m.

The outer walls in the 'standard' buildings are 2m thick.

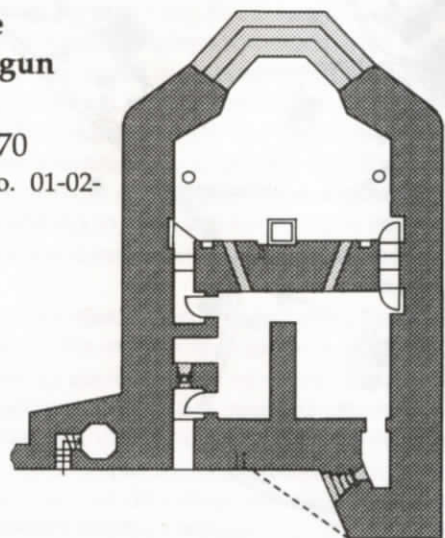
Command post and fire control station

Type M 162a
Building. no. 09



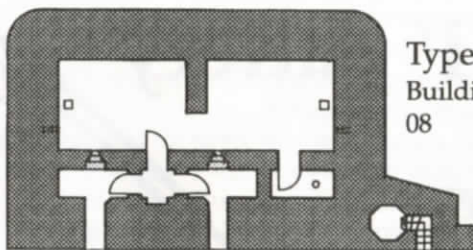
Casemate for 17cm gun

Type M 270
Building. no. 01-02-03-04



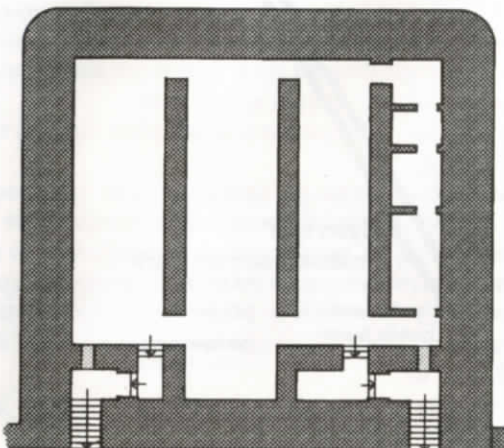
Shelter for approx. 20 men

Type 502
Building. no. 05-07-08



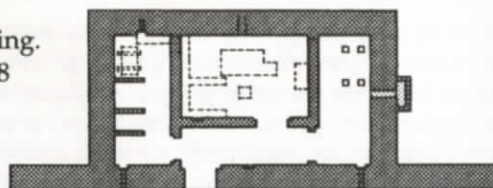
Ammunition depot

Type M 145
Building. no. 11-12



Central machinery room/power plant

Building. no. 18



MuseumsCenter Hanstholm
Tårnvej, DK-7730 Hanstholm

The German naval battery

The
"Hanstholm I"
battery



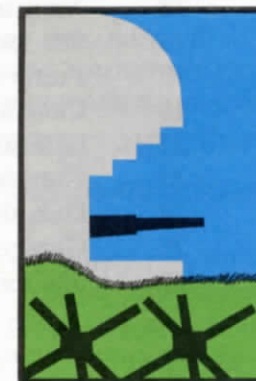
History

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Published by Jørgen Lumbye, Hanstholm. © 1995.
ISBN 87-981471-2-9

Printed by Hanstholm Reklame og Tryk.

The history of the battery.

The battery is set up.

The Germans considered the entry to the waters of Limfjorden and the area around Hanstholm, with its recently-started harbour, as areas of particular tactical significance, along with the two large harbours at Esbjerg and Frederikshavn.

This is why the German navy began surveying work for two gun batteries as soon as the day after the German occupation of Denmark on 9 April 1940. These two batteries were located on the southern point of Agger Tange at the entrance to Limfjorden, and at Hanstholm.

Eight 17cm ship's guns from 1902 were made available, and these were to be mounted with four at each site.

The original battery here in Hanstholm was probably set up near Helshage ('Pynnten'), above the harbour.

The guns were set up as planned, and the two batteries were reported ready for preliminary firing on 27 April 1940. Ranging fire was undertaken on 4 May 1940.

Two medium-sized searchlights were also set up here to provide support for night operations. A couple of light anti-aircraft guns were also installed for self-defence.

The battery receives its name.

In the beginning, the battery near the Thyborøn channel was designated 'Raule', and the Hanstholm battery was named 'Schill'. After 30 June 1940, the batteries were entitled Thyborøn and Hanstholm, respectively, until the former was renamed 'Agger' shortly after, due to its location. From 15 February onwards, these two batteries were part of the same unit as the big 38cm battery in Hanstholm, so that the 17cm battery became 'Hanstholm I', while the 38cm battery was named 'Hanstholm II'. These were the names subsequently retained.

Training of recruits.

There was considerable interest shown in the batteries, so that May 1940 was distinguished by several visits from high-ranking officers and their entourages.

In the summer of 1940 the batteries were employed in the training of recruits. Three teams totalling 170 men in each battery were put through lightning courses lasting four weeks before being sent off to man gun batteries elsewhere. The last of these groups was sent off on 14 September 1940.

It was in this period that the first real firing exercises

were carried out. Firing with live ammunition also took place, as part of the recruits' training.

Firing 'for real'.

For many months after this, everything was fairly quiet around the Hanstholm battery, apart from one single admiral's visit on 4 October 1940 and the setting up of another searchlight in April 1941.

On 4 May 1941, however, the battery fired its first and only shot 'for real'.

This was a warning shot directed at 'S 70', a Skagen fishing boat that had anchored in the lee of the Hanstholm coastline due to bad weather. When it was still there four days later, this seemed so suspicious that the vessel was sent on its way with a single round. No damage was done, and S 70 departed rapidly for its home port. On arrival, however, the vessel was immediately impounded.

Later, there was considerable fuss about the matter, because it turned out that S 70 had in fact been given permission to fish within the three-mile limit by the Hirtshals harbour master. For this he was given a severe reprimand, and the cutter was released.

The final shot.

Day-to-day routine soon returned.

There are accounts of small repairs undertaken on the guns and searchlights, but nothing in particular seems to have happened in the subsequent period.

On 12 September 1941 the 38cm battery undertook the necessary range-finding with a large programme of firing at towed naval targets, and the 17cm battery took part in these exercises with a similar programme.

The 'Hanstholm I' battery was set up as a naval battery whose main task was to direct fire at enemy shipping. Right from the start, however, the guns were mounted freely on the concrete foundations, so that they could if necessary fire in any direction without problems. Their range was sufficient to be able to hit targets in the town of Thisted. In order to ensure that the battery was fully prepared for firing at targets on land, practice firing at such targets was undertaken in January 1942, and repeated in November of the same year. These guns were built into casemates in 1944, making firing at targets on land impossible thereafter.

Two additional firing programmes were carried out - in June 1942 and in May 1943.

The very last shell fired by the battery's 17cm guns was

on 27 May 1943.

The building of the 'Atlantic Wall' gets under way.

From the spring of 1942 onwards, all the German positions along the west coast of Jutland were affected by the decision to undertake a 'Siegfried Line'-like expansion of positions throughout the area.

The 'Siegfried Line' was a defensive line from Germany to the borders with France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands, consisting of a long series of standardised structures. In the spring of 1942 the construction of a large number of similar structures along the entire Atlantic and North Sea coastline was started, as the 'Atlantic Wall'.

The battery is moved.

Part of these plans involved moving the 'Hanstholm I' battery to its present site (see map) in the dunes south of Hansted (Hanstholm). From this point onwards the emplacement was more like a huge building site than a gun battery.

The programme began with the building of the barracks in March 1942, and continued steadily from the first pour on a double group bunker in August 1942 to the completion of the gun casemates in June 1944.

A total of 20,000 m³ of concrete were used over a period of less than two years to construct the buildings now visible as part of the battery site.

The guns themselves are thought to have been moved in October 1942, and the fire control unit was moved - initially to open sites - in December of the same year.

In addition to the concrete structures for the actual fortifications, the gun batteries were to be strengthened by the provision of more ammunition and better fire support. One of the battery's three searchlights—a 90cm Danish unit—was replaced by a much more powerful 150cm German one in the summer of 1943, and the spring of 1944 saw the setting up of a modern radar system as a gunnery aid. Neither of these were ever used in firings, however. At the time when the guns were installed in their casemates in the spring of 1944, it was already a whole year since their last firing, and they were never to fire when installed in their casemates.

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This account of the events in 'Hanstholm I' battery was written on the basis of records from the German navy's orders of the day.

Jørgen Lumbye, Hanstholm. © 1995.

All access to the area is at your own risk!

Please take particular care when inside the buildings. Please bring a powerful torch with you, as there are steps in several places and the drains and cable runs are not covered over. The door openings have sills and restricted headroom, so please be careful where you tread and—in particular—mind your head!

Please respect the natural surroundings, the buildings and information boards.

Enjoy the tour, follow the signs and keep to the path!

Description of the inspection route through the 'Hansthalm I' battery

Please note the two different tours, depending on whether the starting point is the 'Klitterne' dunes car park or the 'Kystvejen' coast road car park.

From the 'Klitterne' dunes car park

The entire system of roads and paths within the emplacement are the originals.

Directly opposite the Y-junction in the road, the edge of a bunker is visible to the right in the dunes. This is the pump station (17), a pump fitted above a well that supplied water to the emplacement.

The route turns to the right along the drive-in leading to a large ammunition bunker (12).

The concrete-covered road. Transport of the heavy ammunition from the ammunition bunkers out to the guns normally took place using wagons. Camouflage netting could be spread above the road. A little further along this road you pass a shelter for twin group type 502 (5), intended as a shelter for the crew of the first gun.

The road also leads to the entrance drive to the casemate for the first gun (1) and the casemate for the second gun (2).

The entrance drive to the second gun leads to a set of steps up to the former site for the third gun (21). This site consists of a concrete base and four ammunition buildings. The site became vacant when the 17cm gun was subsequently installed in its casemate in the summer of 1944, and a 2cm anti-aircraft gun was installed here instead. It is the concrete base and bolt fittings for this latter, considerably smaller, gun that are now visible. Other weapons were also installed in a similar manner on the original sites of the other 17cm guns. In the case of the second gun, an 87mm

gun was installed.

From here visitors proceed down to shelter a for twin group type 502 (7). This bunker was the shelter for the crew of the third gun. This is the only one of the four bunkers of this type in this emplacement to be fitted with a built-on observation point. The hole in the ceiling in the small room on the right-hand side is intended for a periscope so that the crew could observe the surrounding terrain if they had to stay in the completely enclosed bunker during a bombardment. The crew normally lived in barracks. (The white paint on the walls has been applied simply to make the room lighter for visitors. Normally, the walls were covered with hardboard, usually light yellow in colour.)

From the 'Kystvejen' coast road car park

Casemate for the third gun type M270 (3) (please consult the drawing).

It is a good idea to start by inspecting this building from outside the front.

The rounded-off sides of this structure feature large numbers of holes. The idea was to break up the uniformity of the concrete surface and thus serve as camouflage. The effect was created by nailing empty cement sacks to the concrete shuttering during construction, so that holes were left in the concrete when the shuttering was removed.

The route itself.

The structures for the observation platform and the support wall are clearly visible at the rear.

On the right is the gun slit from which fire would cover the entrance side. All the standard types of structures from which fighting was intended to take place (the so-called battle sites) were equipped with this kind of firing slit. There is also a firing slit in the entrance itself, from which the entry point could be covered. All standard structures intended for personnel were equipped with this kind of firing slit.

The gun room is painted in something similar to the original colour scheme. A couple of texts were found on the walls, and these have now been restored. The text on the right was clearly legible, whereas parts of the left-hand text had disappeared completely.

The basement beneath the gun room was used as a place in which to dispose of the empty (and hot) shell cases after firing, via the two round chutes in the sides. The cases could be retrieved at a later opportunity.

Leaving the casemate, the route leads along the concrete-

surfaced approach road over to the demolished bunker (8), a shelter for twin group type 502 (please consult the drawing). This was blown up after the end of the German occupation as part of some tests to determine the strength of these structures. Even though the structure's form is almost unrecognisable, it provides an excellent impression of how thick the walls actually were (2 metres), and of the steel reinforcement rods used in the construction of these standard types. 650 m³ of concrete were used in this structure.

The route continues on past a group bunker (10), intended to serve as a shelter for the crew of the command post. Command post type M162a (9) (please consult the drawing). On the top of this structure was an 8-metre-wide range finder used to determine the range out to targets at sea. This was connected with the calculation room below, where the firing data were prepared and from where there were radio and telephone links to the guns, to observation points along the coastline, and to the head command post in Hansted, as well as to other gun batteries. The observation room enabled surveillance and target spotting to seaward, using binoculars.

Field gun site (24). The installation as a whole consists of a garage (25), a ramp leading up to the gun site, two ammunition buildings and the gun site itself. Just below is an 87mm gun site (23). This could provide covering fire for the rear of the emplacement.

Type Fl 242 for anti-aircraft (16). Six 2cm anti-aircraft guns were set up in the emplacement as a whole, one of them mounted on this structure, which has a shelter for the crew and an ammunition store.

Ammunition bunker type M145 (12) (please consult the drawing). 1380 m³ of concrete were used in this structure, and 144 m² of floor space were available for storage. The shells, the charges, the firing devices and firing tubes were stored separately in different rooms for safety reasons.

Central machinery room (18) (please consult the drawing). This building was of lighter construction, with walls only 1 metre thick, according to the original measurements. The battery would normally receive its electricity from the Danish national grid, so this facility was only used if the electricity supply failed for any reason.

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Map of the 'Hanstholm I' battery

List of buildings in the battery

66 buildings and installations have been registered, measured and mapped within the emplacement.

This list only features buildings mentioned in the texts.

Bold type indicates that a plan of the installation is shown overleaf.

- 01 Gun casemate (type M 270)
- 02 Gun casemate (type M 270)
- 03 **Gun casemate (type M 270)**
- 04 Gun casemate (type M 270)
- 05 Shelter (type 502)
- 07 **Shelter (type 502)**
- 08 Shelter (type 502)
- 09 **Central command post (type M 162a)**
- 10 Shelter (type 501)
- 11 Ammunition depot (type M 145)
- 12 **Ammunition depot (type M 145)**
- 16 Site for anti-aircraft gun (type Fl 242)
- 17 Pump station (type 501)
- 18 **Central machinery room/power plant**
- 21 Gun site
- 23 Gun site
- 24 Gun site
- 25 Garage
- 28 Site for 8cm mortar (type 69)

