

The Battlefield of Devils Mount (Grebbeberg 1940)

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Abstract for the 2012 edition of Fields of Conflict Conference, Budapest.

Number of pages: 6

Abstract

In 2012 RAAP Archaeological Consultancy conducted a metal detector survey on a kilometer long section of a 2 m wide cycle path which crosses the most well known Dutch defense line of 1940. The results exceeded the expectations.

The invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 was the start of the German campaign to conquer Western Europe. Dutch troops from the 8th

Infantry Regiment were outnumbered 10 to 1 and fought a hard but unwinnable battle. Troops of *SS-Standarte 'Der Führer'* broke through all three defense lines during the three days of the battle. 424 Dutch and 170 German lives were lost, these casualties contained within an area of only 6 square kilometers.



The research consisted of systematic metal detection of 2500 square meters of topsoil where the proposed cycle path crosses the main trench line known as 'Stoplijn' (stopping line). The results of this work amazed all parties involved as it was not expected that the side of a heavily used provincial road would still contain so much evidence of the battle 72 years after the event. The results were all the more surprising as many metal detector hobbyists were known to have already visited the battlefield since the 1980's. Around 600 small objects related to the 1940 battle and later allied artillery shelling (in 1945) were retrieved from the top soil. Interpretations based on the distribution of the material across the battlefield have revealed important events in the German assault. In two cases artifacts were literally found on top of the soil, visible for the naked eye, without the need for a detector. The results imply much potential for this kind of battlefield research in the Netherlands.



Grebbeberg Mount, municipality of Rhenen, the Netherlands.
Dutch defenses in green
Axis of the German attack of May 11-13, 1940 in red
Research area in blue.



Tail of a German 5 cm mortar shell for *Leichte Granatwerfer 36*



Tool used for field maintenance of the Lewis M20 machine gun (Dutch). A very rare find.



Piece of shrapnel from a British type artillery shell, fired later in the war (1944-1945).



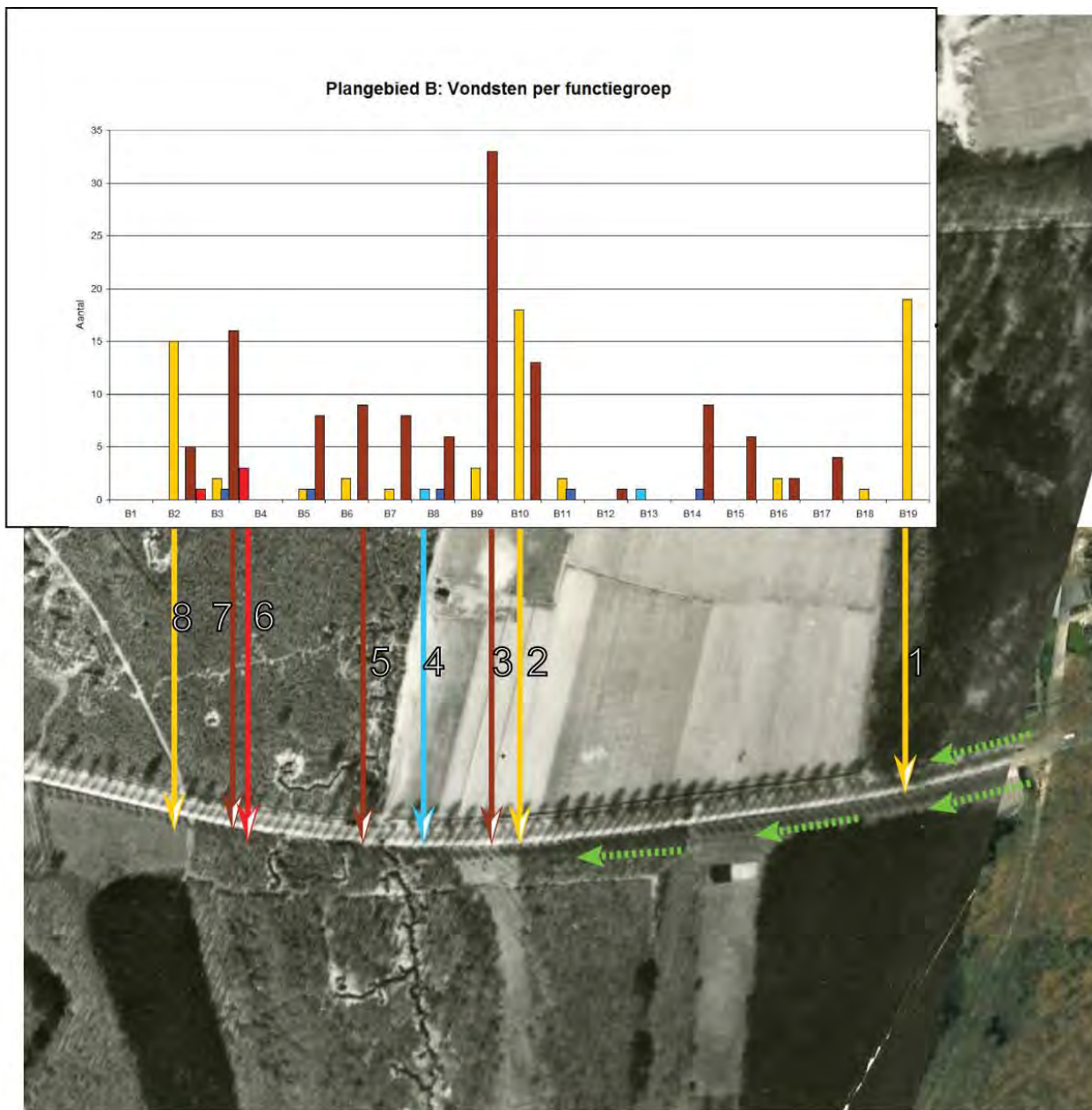
Dutch 1940 infantry tent pole connector.



Spent German 8x57 *Mauser* cartridges



Spent Dutch 6,5x53R *Mannlicher* cartridges



■ wapens munitie 1: pistool
 ■ wapens munitie 2: handgranaten
 ■ wapens munitie 3: geweer
■ wapens munitie 4: ondersteuningswapens
 ■ stelling en versperring

- 1 German troops advance along the main road and dig in near the edge of the ryefield and fire at the Dutch trenches
- 2 Germans have advanced (green arrows) towards barbed wire roadblocks and set up suppressive fire
- 3 Detector finds prove the former presence of barbed wire fences at this point which can be seen in this areal photograph
- 4 German attackers start throwing stick handgrenades towards the Dutch trenches
- 5 Moderate concentration of wire finds indicate the location of Dutch trenches between B5 and B7
- 6 Small caliber 9mm kurz cartridges indicate trenches were overrun and Dutch defender fired at Germans within pistol range
- 7 More trench materials -wire and nails- at this spot indicate trench disassembly after battle
- 8 Dutch 6,5 mm rifle cartridges between the trees indicate that defenders fired at attackers from outside their defenceline

Results of the survey. The x-axis of the graph represents the transect (divided in a grid B1 – B19) and is scaled to coincide with the survey grid on the south side of the road on the aerial photograph of 1944. Concentrations of finds in the graph (i.e. in B19) are projected with arrows (i.e. arrow 1) on the spot in the picture where these were found.