



## The Archaeology of Military Graffiti in the Netherlands

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Although studies on contemporary military graffiti are rare in Dutch archaeology, two recent cases presented here may lend the topic momentum. In 2012 and 2015 graffiti was recorded in two unrelated military structures, resulting in the largest current database of military graffiti collected within the context of heritage management in the Netherlands.

The first case is the barracks in the city of Ede. Used for just over 100 years, all buildings in this military complex were abandoned by the army in 2010. Realizing that contemporary artifacts and graffiti would likely receive little attention, the author initiated a pilot to survey two of the abandoned buildings. The results convinced the municipality to finance a much larger study in which 20 more buildings were investigated just before many were demolished. Over 300 instances of military graffiti were recorded, primarily from the period 1939 to 2010.

The second case is a fortification in the Amsterdam Defense Line called *Fort benoorden Spaarndam* [Fortress north of Spaarndam]. Originating from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fortress was inhabited until 1945 by both Dutch and, later, German (occupation) forces, resulting in numerous examples of military graffiti and murals. After the war the fortress lost strategic importance, and was abandoned in the 1970s. The graffiti was gradually rediscovered in the empty structure by a volunteer group over thirty years later and fully recorded in 2015, financed by the Province of Noord-Holland.

These cases give rise to an interesting comparison. They illustrate how popular and military culture changed in the last hundred years, and how various periods resulted in different trends in self-expression by military personnel in their living and working environment. As work on this comparison is still in progress, we will present our first results.