

**Proposals for the enhancement
of the German defences of L`Ancrese**

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Festung Guernsey

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Part 1 Introduction

The following document is a report prepared by Festung Guernsey relating to the surviving German second world war defence works within the area of L'Ancrese Common. It has been compiled with the aim of setting out how these may be incorporated into any future initiatives for the enhancement of the Common.

Most of the technical descriptions used in this report are in common English for example machinegun, searchlight etc., however some correct German designations have been used i.e.; Flak= anti-aircraft.

Enclosed is an A1 plan of the L`Ancrese area, all plan references in this report have been highlighted in red.

Original map © Digimap

Part 2 Report detail

2:1 Historical context

Following their arrival in June 1940 the German occupying forces expected that the war would soon be over with certain German victory. However, by the beginning of 1941 with the indefinite postponement of the invasion of Britain, Hitler's thoughts turned towards the invasion of Russia.

Hitler was convinced that Churchill would attempt to retake the Channel Islands, firstly to boost British moral and secondly as a gesture of support for the Soviets. Accordingly, it was ordered that the defences on the Islands be strengthened.

The area of L'Ancrese Common between Fort Doyle and Grande Havre were considered particularly venerable to attack by amphibious assault, and therefore justified considerable resources in its defence.

2:2 L'Ancrese Common 1941 – 45

The following section contains a brief over view of the defence works carried out by the German occupying forces between 1941-45.

Coastal Defences;

The most heavily defended positions were classed as Stutzpunkt (Strongpoint / Stp) and were established at; Stp Marschen (Fort Le Marchant) **MN**

- 2 x 10.5cm guns in casemates
- 1 x 5cm anti-tank gun
- 1 x 8cm mortar
- 2 x 5cm mortars
- 4 x machineguns
- 2 x 60cm search lights

Stp Nebelhorn (Fort Doyle) **NH**

- 1 x 10.5cm gun in casemate
- 2 x 3.7cm anti- tank guns
- 2 x 5cm mortars
- 2 x machineguns
- 1 x armoured turret with machineguns
- 1 x tank turret with machinegun
- 3 x 2cm anti-aircraft guns
- 1 60cm search light

Intermediate positions classed as Widerstandsnest (resistance nest / Wn) were established at;

Wn Garen (Baie des Greve) **GN**

- 1 x 4.7cm anti-tank gun in shelter
- 1 x machinegun in tank turret
- 3 x machineguns

Wn Golfwerk (Pembroke terminus) **GF**

- 1 x 4.7cm anti-tank gun in casemate
- 1 x machinegun

Wn Dohlenturm (L'Ancrese east) **DT**

- 1 x 4.7cm anti-tank gun in casemate
- 1 x machinegun

Wn Dohlenfels (The Doyle) **DF**

- 1 x 3.7cm gun with machinegun in tank turret
- 2 x 8cm mortars
- 2 x machineguns

All beaches were obstructed with mined anti-tank obstacles and Wn Golfwerk and Wn Dohlenturm linked by an anti-tank wall for most of the length of L'Anresse bay. Larger open areas of the Common were obstructed with poles linked by trip wires attached to explosive charges to prevent airborne landings by parachute or glider.

Nine mine fields were laid within the area of the Common comprising of anti personnel mines and anti tank mines.

Anti- aircraft;

La Varde Hill was chosen by the Luftwaffe as the site of one of six heavy anti-aircraft batteries on the Island. The battery was known to the Germans as Flak battery Dolmen on account of its proximity to the La Varde Megalithic tomb. It was armed with six x 8.8cm, three x 2cm anti-aircraft guns and 4 machineguns.

As well as their anti-aircraft role the weapons of the battery could also fire on targets attempting to land in L'Anresse Bay. The battery was also provided with Radar and a 150cm search light.

Radar;

La Grande Hougue, known to the Germans as Grosshugel became the site of one of a chain of coast watching Radar stations established on the Islands by the German navy. Provided with a Freya Radar unit with an effective range of 75 miles, two 2cm light anti-aircraft guns and machineguns for perimeter defence. A substantial bunker was provided to house generators, crew and equipment.

Railway;

With the massive construction program of fortifications planned it became apparent to the fortress engineers the Islands road network would be hopelessly inadequate to carry the predicted volumes of building materials required.

It was therefore decided to construct a light railway running from St Peter Port via St Sampson to L'Eree. A branch ran from L'Islet entering the Common at Lucsall and then via Pembroke terminated at the pebble bank at La Fontenelle.

Various shorter spurs and sidings served construction sites etc. One such line served extensive sand pits excavated at Les Amarreus where many thousands of tons of sand were extracted for use in the manufacture of concrete.

With the winding down of the construction program all railway lines beyond St Sampson were lifted by the end of 1943.

2:3 Post war history

An immediate task carried out by the Royal Engineers after liberation on the 9th of May 1945 was, using German prisoners of war to blast a substantial breach in the anti-tank wall at Pembroke to enable troops and equipment to be landed by landing craft. Priority was given to the removal of mines and other explosive devices.

All fixed weapons were rendered inoperable and left in situ until such time they could be removed for disposal or scrapped. For a number of years much remained to be seen and the fortifications became a playground for children of the parish.

In 1947 a major scrap drive was implemented and over the next few years the fortifications were stripped of remaining weapons, fixtures and fittings. By 1948 the Islands tourist industry was getting back to its pre-war prominence and, as many bunkers and trenches were now being used as unofficial toilets or rubbish tips these were back-filled and landscaped.

Post war several bunkers have, with and without official blessing been put to use as stores and club houses, however until recently there had been no recognition of the historical significance of these structures or any attempt at conservation work carried out on them.

2:4 Historic significance of site

2:4:1 International and national significance of site

The German fortifications on Guernsey formed a significant link in the chain of fortifications known as Hitlers Atlantic wall, constructed between 1941- 1944 from Norway to the Spanish border, to defend mainland Europe from an anticipated invasion by allied forces.

The Channel Islands were the only part of the British Isles to be occupied by German forces during world war 2.

2:4:2 Local significance of site

The fortifications on L'Ancrese Common form an important part of the overall chain of defenses constructed by the German occupying forces on the Island during world war 2. In particular, the anti-aircraft battery on La Varde was one of only two on the Island constructed to fortress standard, the other being at Rue Des Laurens, Torteval. However, this site is in multiple private ownership and has been extensively altered by post war development.

The Radar installation on La Grande Hougue is also of unique design and cannot be found anywhere else on the Channel Islands and its associated generator bunker the only example on the Island.

2:5 Surviving structures

It would be beyond the scope of this report to list all individual surviving structures within L'Ancrese Common, however, sites relevant to the proposals suggested in the next section are covered in greater detail.

It is probable most principle fortress standard structures relating to the coastal strong points and resistance nests remain intact although many are partially or completely buried. Some of the more lightly constructed structures relating to these positions have been destroyed however it is probable other buried structures remain to be discovered. For example recently obtained post war photographs show now buried mortar pits in the Fort Le Marchant area with well preserved painted range markings etc.

Flak Battery Dolmen, Plan A

Six type L401 bunkers with emplacements for the 8.8cm guns with crew and ammunition shelters below survive **A1,A2,A3,A4,A5,A6**. Four are completely buried, the emplacements on **A1** and **A2** are exposed there is restricted access to the interior of **A2**. The type L403 command post **A7** remains in good condition and recently has been completely exposed and made secure.

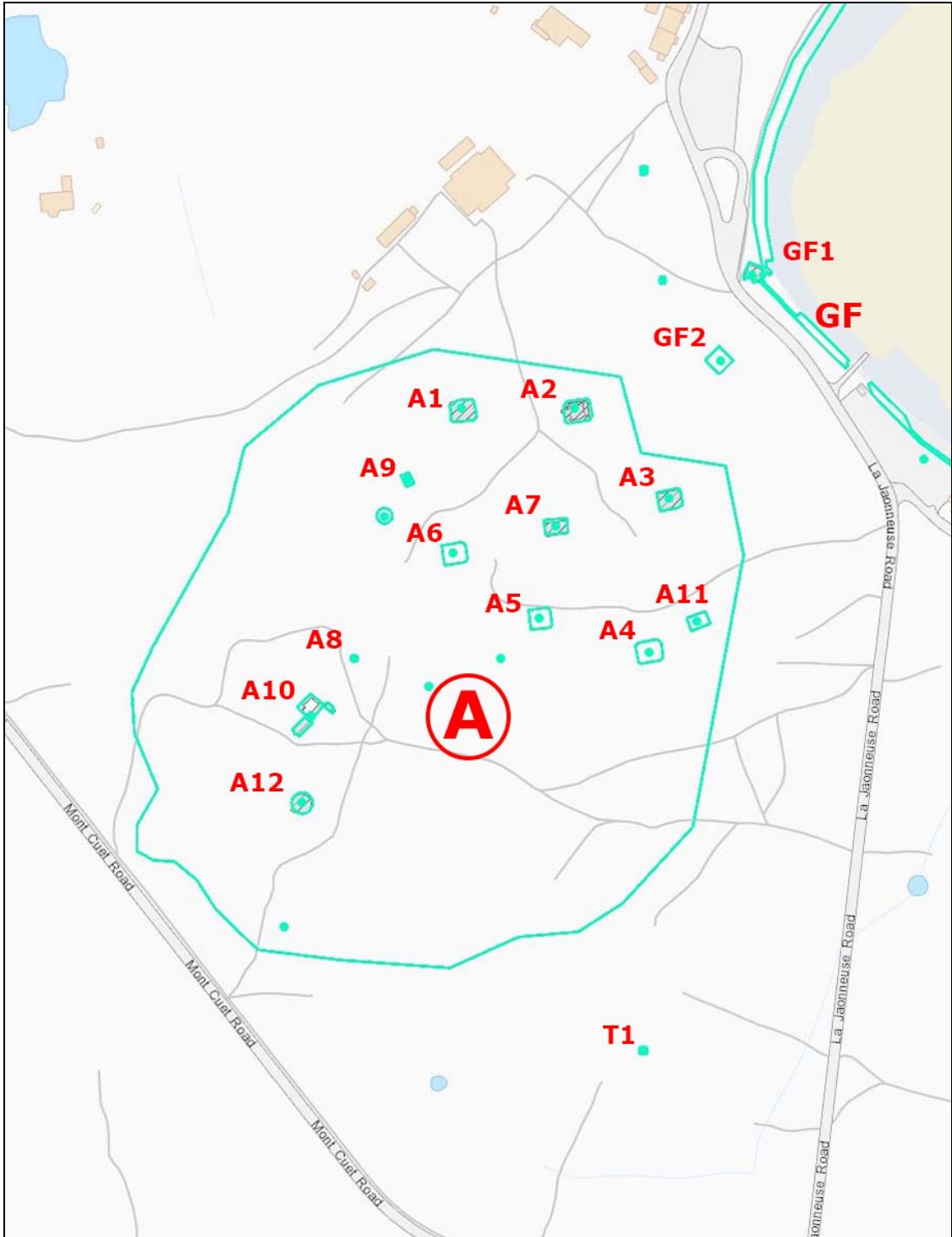
Type L405 generator bunker with roof top emplacement that housed the battery range finding apparatus **A10** is exposed and has access to the interior which is in fair condition has however suffered extensive post war internal fire damage, and water ingress. Immediately adjacent to this is a shelter constructed of granite with a flat concrete roof, this too has suffered internal fire damage and is showing signs of structural deterioration. Type L406 generator bunker **A11** is completely buried and is believed to have suffered post war internal fire damage.

The circular structure **A12** mounted a 2cm anti-aircraft gun. Unfortunately, the roof top emplacement for the weapon, as well as much of the structures original cladding of granite sets has been removed. The concrete access steps to the roof remain but are in very poor condition.

Granite steps leading up to a field order emplacement for a 2cm anti-aircraft gun are visible built onto the side of La Varde Dolmen. **A8**.

An emplacement for a machinegun mounted in a tank turret survives at **A9**, completely obscured by gorse and scrub.

It should be noted that other minor structures related to the Flak battery survive and it is probable others exist buried.



Plan A
Flak Battery Dolmen, Le Varde

Radar site Grosshugel **Plan B**

Visible on the summit of La Grande Hougue **B1** is the possibly unique emplacement for the Freya Radar unit.

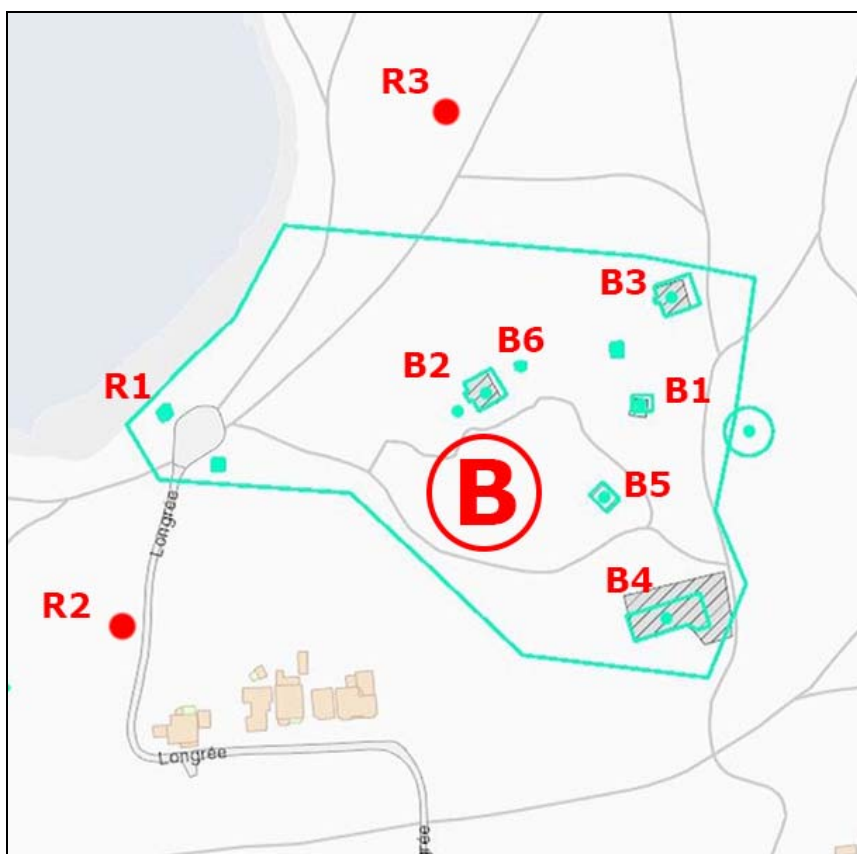
Two type FI242 bukers for 2cm Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns **B2, B3**, are sealed, however remain in excellent condition.

A substantial bunker for generators and personnel **B4** is believed to be of unique design (a similar bunker exists on Jersey) and currently used for storage.

The roofless structure constructed from concrete bricks **B5** probably served as the mess hut.

The purpose of the small concrete hut **B6** is unknown.

It should be noted that other minor structures related to the Radar site survive and it is probable others exist buried (a wartime photograph appears to show a large water tank on the eastern side of the hill).



Plan B
Radar site Grosshugel, La Grande Hougue

Railway

Due to post war landscaping and the effects of erosion few traces of the railway survive, however the base of a rail served stone crusher at **R1** is perhaps the most prominent.

A shallow partially filled in cutting runs parallel to the road at **R2**.

Recent clearance of gorse and scrub revealed well defined track bed, cutting and shallow embankment at **R3**.

The path from the car park at the eastern end of L'Anresse Bay as far as the road leading to Fort Le Marchant follows the route of the railway and several shallow cuttings and embankments are discernable.

The track bed is visible at **R4** running parallel to the 9th fairway.

Miscellaneous

Two small bunkers built as part of the fortress telephone network are at **T1**, adjacent to the 8th tee and **T2** in the corner of the Vale Church car park.

2:6 Recommendations and proposals

The following section gives an outline brief of ideas that Festung Guernsey suggests could enhance the contribution the German fortifications add to L'Ancrese Common as an educational and leisure resource.

It is proposed that resources are concentrated on two or three significant sites, and these possibly form part of a linked heritage trail.

Flak Battery Dolmen; **Plan A**

1; Festung Guernsey currently manage and maintain the L403 command bunker **A7**. Much work has been carried out on the bunker including, clearing the interior of all rubbish and debris, cleaning the walls of soot damage, installing lighting (powered by a generator) and refurbishing one room as an interpretation center.

2; It is highly desirable that one of the L401 bunkers be secured for conservation. Access to the two bunkers currently partially exposed **A1, A2** is seriously compromised by their proximity to the 18th hole of the golf course.

It is considered that the L401 at **A3** is the most suitable choice having good access without conflict with the golf course. An opportunity to inspect the interior of this bunker several years ago revealed it to be in very good condition. It is proposed that the roof top emplacement and entrances be cleared of back-fill, landscaped and the interior cleaned and provided with interpretation as in the command bunker.

3; Type L405 generator bunker **A10**. Although as mentioned in the previous section this bunker is in poor internal condition. Its excellent location with commanding views would make an ideal location for interpretation boards providing information about the surrounding area. It is proposed the bunker is secured with a gate, the interior be cleared of rubbish and remedial work carried out to prevent the entry of water into the bunker.

4; Type L406 generator bunker **A11**. This is the only known example of this type on the Island. Although it is believed to have suffered internal fire damage and its close proximity to the 17th fairway could cause issues with access it is considered to be significant enough to justify exposing the entrance and conserving. It would also be ideal for housing a generator to provide power for **A3** and **A7**.

5; The deteriorating structural condition of the granite tower **A12** and the shelter adjoining **A11** is cause for concern. The stairs to the roof of **A12** especially requiring immediate attention. It is noted that the appearance of this structure could be significantly enhanced by replacing the missing granite cladding should the granite sets become available.

Radar site Grosshugel; **Plan B**

1; Because of its prominent location the emplacement for the Freya Radar unit **B1** is considered an ideal location for interpretation boards providing information on the position and surrounding area.

2; The type Fl242 bunkers **B2** and **B3** are two of the best examples of this type on the Island and as such are considered worthy of long term conservation. It is recommended the doors be opened, secured with a gate and the interior cleared of debris. It is suggested any remedial work be carried out as required.

3; The generator bunker **B4**, is in private use and therefore access is not presently available to the public, however it is suggested due to its possibly unique design, provision should be made for its long term conservation.

Strongpoints and Resistance nests

The conservation and interpretation of these sites is problematical in several respects due to the number of sites and structures involved, and also because on several sites all surviving relics are completely buried making on site interpretation meaningless. It is therefore proposed that one or two sites are selected to interpret these as a whole.

1; The type 676 casemate for a 4.7cm anti-tank gun incorporated into the anti-tank wall adjacent to the Pembroke bus terminus **GF1** is ideally placed to be turned into a un-manned interpretation center. A similar facility has been successfully provided in the magazine at Rouse Tower and in a German bunker on Alderney. This could provide an overview of all the defences of the area and become the starting point for heritage walks or a 'bunker trail'. It is also suggested this may be a good location for a memorial plaque in memory of Foreign forced labourers who suffered during the construction of the fortifications.

A personnel shelter to the west of the bus terminus **GF2** is in an excellent state of preservation and could perform a similar role. It is however a much larger structure and would require considerably more resources to establish and operate.

2; Although Stp Marschen (Fort Le Marchant) was the most heavily defended strongpoint on L'Ancrese Common, with the exception of the west facing casemate for a 10.5cm field gun which is currently in use as a store by the Guernsey Police, there is little visible evidence remaining due to post war landscaping. Two heavy machinegun emplacements survive at **MN1** and **MN2**, it is suggested these could be cleared of brambles and debris and **MN2** have an interpretation board providing information on the defenses of the eastern end of L'Ancrese Common.

3; As stated in section 2:3 most trenches and lighter field works have been destroyed or back-filled, however an interesting group of open trenches, weapon and mortar pits survive on and around a granite outcrop to the west of Fort Doyle, **NH1**. It is suggested these could be further opened up and access improved as has been carried out on public land adjacent to Fort Saumarez.

Railway

As stated in section 2:3 few physical traces of the railway survive. Although few could argue that the stone crusher base at **R1** enhances the appearance of the area, its existence could be justified with an interpretation board giving details and showing the route of the railway. As part of this, the visible track bed at **R2** and **R3** could be enhanced by further clearance and regular cutting of scrub in these areas.

It is intended the above proposals could form the basis of a fortification trail or guided walks possibly in conjunction with occasional open days at Flak battery Dolmen, this however would require careful planning to avoid conflict with users of the rifle range and golf course.

Festung Guernsey recommends that a management plan be put in place to protect the areas outlined in green on the attached A1 plan to prevent the accidental damage or loss of buried or visible German defence works in the event of landscaping or development work carried out in those areas. For example tidying of an area in the aftermath of a furze fire in the Beaucette area several years ago resulted in the loss of minefield markers and traces of field works. Although we recognise it may not be possible to save all occupation relics on the Common we believe it to be important that they be recorded before their loss.

It may also be beneficial to carry out limited archaeological excavations in certain areas to determine the extent of and identify certain buried structures. A good example of this was the combined excavation by staff from Guernsey Museums and members of Festung Guernsey in 2011 of a buried machinegun position discovered during the clearance of scrub at Radar site Grosshugel.

Part 3 Summary

As awareness and interest of the Islands wartime military heritage continues to grow with the general public, Festung Guernsey considers this project to be an exciting opportunity to develop a unique site on public land with good access.

It is believed the proposals as outlined in brief above could enhance visitor interest and provide a worthwhile educational resource within L'Ancrese Common.

Although what ultimately can be achieved will be governed by financial, planning and health and safety considerations Festung Guernsey looks forward to working with the Common Historical Advisory Group and it is hoped the above report may contribute to the proposed enhancement of the area by the Friends of the Common.

Festung Guernsey
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