



MILITOUR

Amersfoort, Leusden Soest en Soesterberg

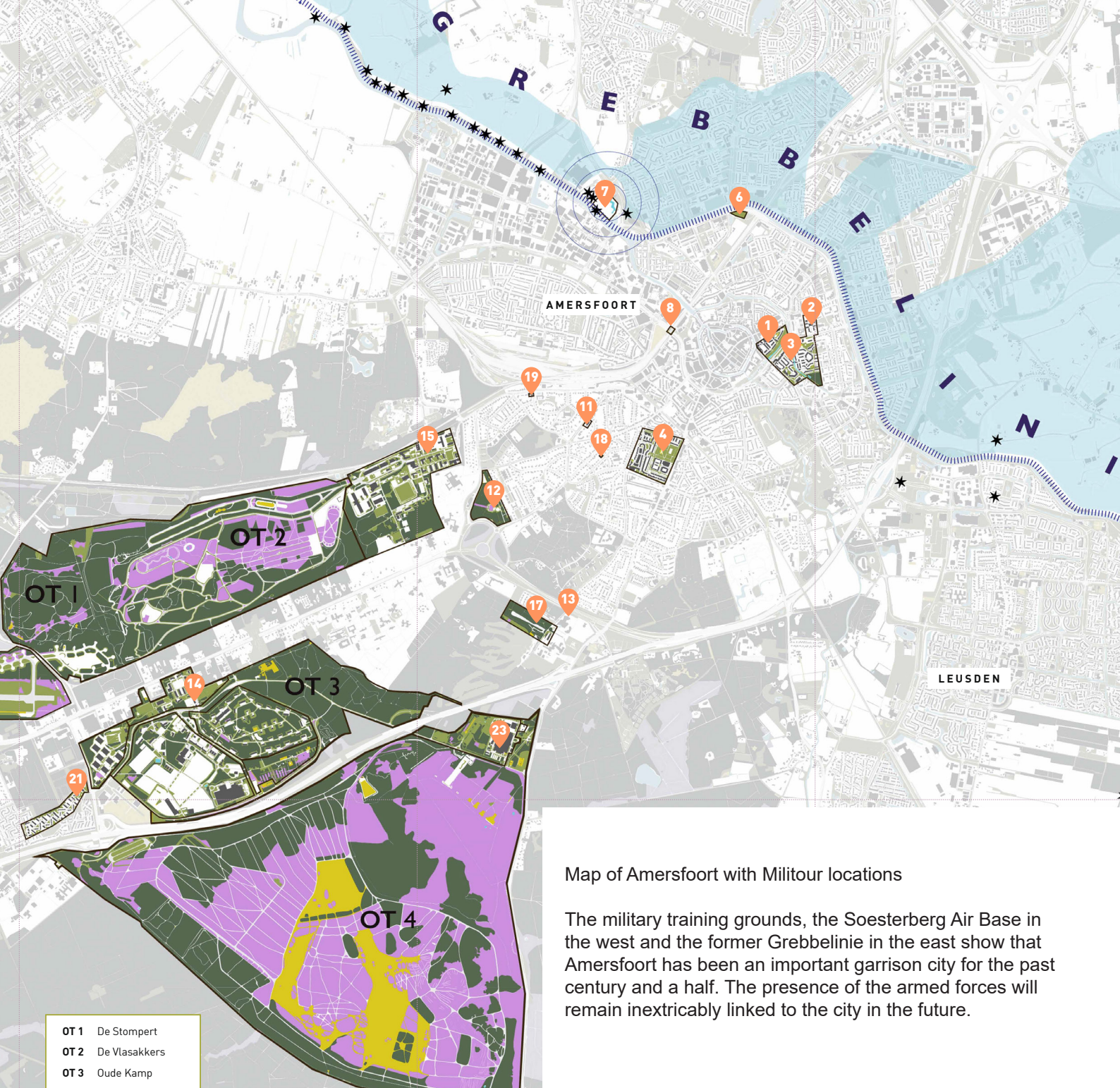
The presence of the Dutch Ministry of Defence contributed greatly to the spatial and economic development of Amersfoort and its surroundings. As of the Belgian secession (1839), returning troops are partly housed in Amersfoort in old, vacant buildings. With the construction of the railroad (1863), the city really comes into the picture as a permanent station for soldiers. Amersfoort becomes a garrison city. All because of the cities' accessibility, central location, cheap land and proximity to training grounds. The Military Hospital is built and several barracks follow. In 1870 a second line of forts was completed, requiring a large complement of infantry (soldiers on foot) and artillery (fire support).

At this time the Dutch Ministry of Defence gives Amersfoort and its railroads a big boost which makes the city develop rapidly. Amersfoort and Utrecht become the two largest garrison cities in the Netherlands. Thanks to the growth of the city, many barracks soon come to lie within the urban area and new barracks have to be located further and further towards the edges of the built-up area. This process is directly linked to Soesterberg Air Base, which was established in 1913.

There are many traces of the military history to be found in the city and in the landscape. Many places also bear witness to the traumatic consequences of warfare. National Monument Kamp Amersfoort is a place that confronts us with concepts such as freedom, citizenship, democracy, tolerance, (in)justice and prejudice.



International tensions result in the current high level of investment in defense equipment and expansion. A situation that parallels to that of a century and a half ago. In Amersfoort space is being made available again for living, working and training areas, storage and training grounds. The Bernhardkazerne, for example, is being revitalized. This architectural map shows military heritage in Amersfoort and its surroundings with emphasis on architecture, urban planning and landscape design.



Map of Amersfoort with Militour locations

The military training grounds, the Soesterberg Air Base in the west and the former Grebbelinie in the east show that Amersfoort has been an important garrison city for the past century and a half. The presence of the armed forces will remain inextricably linked to the city in the future.

A large municipal stables complex was located on the Beestenmarkt in the 19th century. After Belgium's independence, returning troops are dismantled, but this takes years. Many military horses are taken care of at the Beestenmarkt. From 1831, the Beestenmarkt housed the Riding Artillery for quite some time. A riding school with as many as 940 stalls and many other facilities such as a riding and farrier school was built.

After World War II, horses are hardly relevant to the armed forces anymore. Motorized traffic takes over that leading role. The stable complex becomes part of the Air Force and is used as a depot for clothing and equipment (uniforms, combat suits, helmets, gas masks, shoes) with tailoring shops to make repairs. When The William III Barrack is demolished in 1978, the stables complex is also demolished.



1 Former horse stables



2 **Military Hospital** (1877/1894, disbanded in 1966)
Hogeweg 70/ Zeevaarderspad
Design 1877: Engineer Lieutenant Colonel Commander Klijnsma, architect transformation: Office Winhov

The symmetrically designed Military Hospital looks like a country house with many details from different styles. Quadrangular connecting wings connect the main building with four simultaneously designed barracks. Another barrack intended for the infectious sick is located in the rear yard. The garden at the rear is intended as a vegetable garden, and the surrounding park with winding footpaths allows sick military personnel to walk and recuperate. In 1966, the military hospital was disbanded and later put into use by administrative units of the Army. Eventually, the complex became vacant for many years. Since 2020, Office Winhov has been working on the transformation of the special site into a residential area on behalf of Schipper Bosch.



3 **Prince Willem III barracks** (1883/1886/1901, renovation 1937, demolished 1978)
Heiligenbergerweg (formerly: Grote Nachtegaalsteeg 18) / Cavaleriestraat Piet Blom
A. Kleijnheus

The barracks were built for the mounted arms (artillery and cavalry) in 1883. A mounted weapon is a branch of the armed forces that originally moved on horseback. The complex expanded to include a riding and farrier school, an indoor racecourse and a horse hospital. Located on Blekerseiland, the barracks initially consist of five buildings connected at the front by a monumental neo-Renaissance style facade. The long front facade is articulated into several building sections with an extra-high entrance building in the middle. Although the complex looks imposing, it is very austere inside.

During World War II, the complex housed SS units. Much was eventually demolished, but two rows of non-commissioned officers' houses on Cavaleriestraat (1899) were kept because of the great housing shortage after WWII. The building that now houses De WAR is also still standing. The demolition of the Willem III Barracks (1978) to quickly build housing is not well received by many residents. Especially since there is a concrete proposal to maintain the buildings and give them a mixed use. On the site of the barracks, an architecturally unattractive residential area was built in the 1980s.

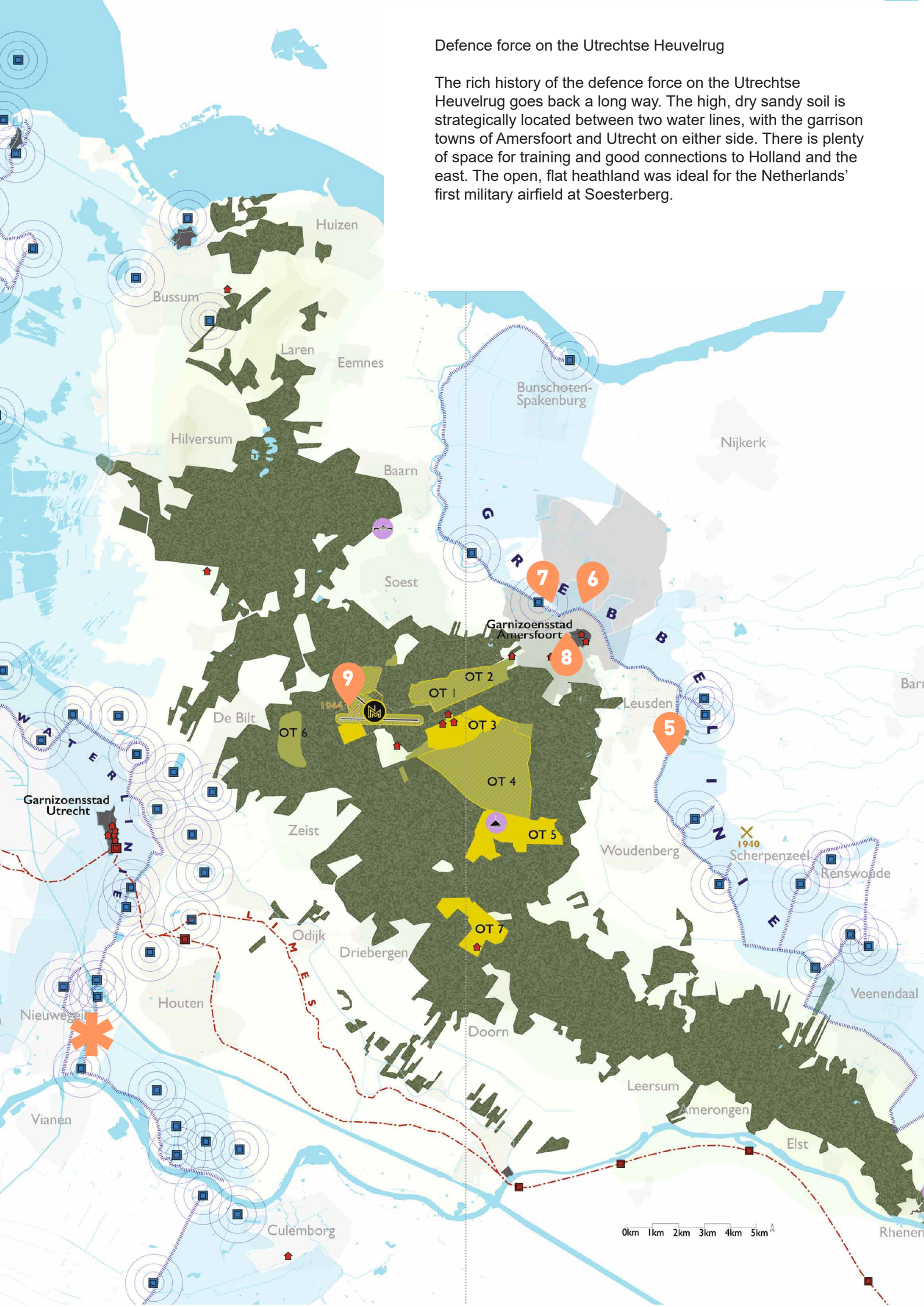


4 **Juliana van Stolberg barracks** (1889-92, in use until 1978, converted to housing in 1980-83)
Leusderweg, between Westerstraat and Van Campenstraat
ir. P. Klynkens, A. Kleijnheus

The barracks are being built for a regiment (unit) of Infantry. These are soldiers who fight on foot. Two barracks buildings side by side and two at right angles to them enclose a large military training area with the open side facing the Leusderweg. A 450-meter long wrought iron fence, donated by the Amersfoort population, closes off the grounds. The complex is built in neo-Renaissance style. The front is impressive. At the rear several service buildings are located, including four large "flying halls" (resembling hangars) with curved steel trusses. After the barracks closed, demolition was imminent. With the demolition of the Willem III Barracks still fresh in the memory, residents revolt. The barracks are squatted and the city council finally decides to refrain from demolition. Development company Eurowoningen transforms the battalion buildings into housing. Part of the park is preserved, as well as 120 meters of fencing. The flight halls are unfortunately lost. The row of non-commissioned officers' houses on Appelweg is redeveloped in 2016 into townhouses with "convents": a path runs between two pieces of garden.

Defence force on the Utrechtse Heuvelrug

The rich history of the defence force on the Utrechtse Heuvelrug goes back a long way. The high, dry sandy soil is strategically located between two water lines, with the garrison towns of Amersfoort and Utrecht on either side. There is plenty of space for training and good connections to Holland and the east. The open, flat heathland was ideal for the Netherlands' first military airfield at Soesterberg.



5,6,7,8 and 9 Military defenses

In and around Amersfoort there are many military defenses that provide protection from shooting and bombing, such as casemates. These are pre-World War II bunkers. During the Cold War, for fear of a Russian attack, shelters were constructed in many places. In Amersfoort, some of these cellars later served as parking garages. Of particular note is the bicycle tunnel under the Stadsring to De Nieuwe Poort (8), which also serves as a possible shelter. In case of danger, part of the tunnel can be closed on both sides with bricks.



5 Bunker R010-P “Museum bunker Grebbelinie” (1944-1945)
Langesteeg, Leusden

The Grebbelinie is a defense system that was built well before World War II, but played an important role in this war. Part of the German defense line runs along the route of the Grebbelinie. Because the Dutch bunkers face east, they cannot be used by the German military. The bunker R010-P was built to stop the Allies. It is a simple concrete structure with two-meter-thick walls, a loophole and a door. The interior now houses a small museum. The bunker stands in an open relationship with the landscape, where all other elements of the war can be found, such as the reconstruction farms, the fields of fire and the line dike in which another trench has been built. At the former camp site of German soldiers, soldiers' benches have been reinstalled.

Bunkers are concrete masses that can lie in the way at times. In Amersfoort a casemate (6) has been moved for this reason and can be found between the Ringweg Koppel and the Zielhorsterweg. Also along the Grebbelinie you can find casemates, such as on the Schans (7) a part of the Grebbelinie. Near Utrecht, bunkers of the Nieuwe Hollandse Waterlinie have been lifted by giant cranes and placed in the landscape as an 'objet trouvé' on new foundations. Based on an idea of the landscape design offices H+N+S and B+B.



9 Shelter 611

This bomb shelter was built to park and maintain fighter jets in it. The concrete roof has a curved shape, so bombs ricochet off it. The shelters are far enough apart so that the deflected bombs cannot land on the shelter next door. Nowadays, many shelters have a new function, for example as a workplace for artists. Some shelters have been closed and are being returned to nature.



10

Soesterberg Air Base (1910-2008)
National Military Museum (2014)
 Soesterberg
Architect: Dick van Wageningen Architects
Landscape architect: H+N+S Landscape Architects

Soesterberg Air Base is the birthplace of military aviation in the Netherlands. In 1913, the Army Aviation Department (LVA) made its first flights here. After the German invasion, the airbase was converted into a “Fliegerhorst,” intended for bombing flights against England. Several well-camouflaged camps are established in the vicinity of the air base. At the end of World War II, the airbase is largely destroyed, but in 1951 ‘Soesterberg’ is already operational again. In the 1950s, the airbase was designated as a NATO base and part of it was named “Camp Nieuw Amsterdam. From 1954 to 1994, American soldiers are stationed here. Their families came to live elsewhere (see no.21). The base is disbanded due to defense cuts and closes in 2008.



The formerly closed Soesterberg Air Base is now open to the public. In a vast landscape of 45 hectares, stands a sleek hangar (aircraft storage facility) with a flat roof measuring 110 by 250 meters. It houses the National Military Museum, which displays the history of the Army, Air Force and Military Police. The museum is aligned with the old runway and stands exactly on the site of four old T2 hangars.

The landscape design by H+N+S links the cultural history of this site to the nature development task and recreation. In the landscape, restored bomb craters recall the Allied bombardment at the end of World War II. The craters have a practical function as well as an aesthetic one. They serve as water collection and act as a special ecological micro-environment. On the grounds bunkers, monuments and memorials are located. The architecture of the National Military Museum was awarded the Abe Bonnema Prize.



11

Seat of the garrison commander (1903)
 Koningin Wilhelminalaan 21
architect: Noordijk and Van de Vlis

For decades, this strikingly situated villa housed the Garnizoenscommandant Amersfoort and his staff. He is an influential man and responsible for all domestic affairs of Garnizoen Amersfoort and contacts with civil society. The complexes in Leusden and the Army section of Soest(erberg) also fall under his management. Special about the building is the protruding facade that continues over the entire height (risalite) with covered balcony with round arch. The municipal monument currently houses an office.



12

The Belgenmonument
 1916-1918, Belgenlaan 9
Architect: Huib Hoste, landscape architect: Louis van der Swalmen

The Belgenmonument was realized in memory of the reception of Belgian civilians and soldiers during the First World War. In the first months of this war, one million Belgian refugees, out of a population of 6 million Dutch, come to our country, which remains neutral. Many refugees quickly return home, but about 130,000 civilians and soldiers remain in the Netherlands until 1918. The monument was executed by Belgian military personnel as a work-creation and learning project and as a gesture of gratitude. The main building and the wall with works of art were built in Amsterdam School style. The Netherlands sent a bill of nearly 60 million guilders afterwards for the relief provided. Only after that is paid will the Netherlands accept the monument in 1938.



13

The Nissen huts
NOTE NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

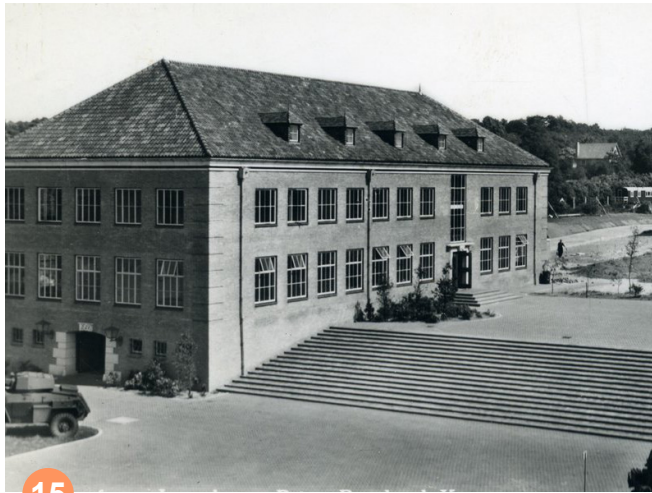
A Nissenhut is an emergency shelter consisting of a curved corrugated metal roof and a brick or corrugated metal front and rear gable. These prefabricated shelters were developed during the First World War. During World War II, a further developed variant, the Romney shed, was widely used. Because of the relatively low weight of the structure, it required little or no foundation. A number of Nissen huts still stand in Amersfoort. It is a fraught place, because in 1951, Moluccan KNIL soldiers and their families were temporarily housed and demobilized (discharged from military service) in these sheds. The KNIL (Royal Dutch East Indies Army) is the Dutch army in the former colony of the Dutch East Indies.



14

Du Moulin Barracks (1938-39/45)
 Amersfoortsestraatweg 80/Zeisterspoor 19, between Soesterberg and Amersfoort
NOTE NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
Col. engineer J.C. Stumphius

The barracks are designated for a company of railroad troops and a battalion of pioneers. A company is a military unit and four or more companies form a battalion (army unit that can operate independently). After the capitulation (1940), German Nazis had the barracks dismantled and the Luftwaffe (air force) moved in. After WWII, the Dutch Army returned with engineers, a camouflage and mining school and later with a ready tank battalion. It currently houses training in logistics. The complex consists of several buildings around a central call station. The architecture with yellow brick and blue steel frames is moderately modern. The faint hipped roofs and roof overhangs are remotely reminiscent of the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. The barracks may become available for redevelopment in the future in connection with redeployment of barracks sites by the military.



15 **Bernhard Barracks (1939)**
Barchman Wuytierslaan 198
Colonel-engineer J.C. Stumphius

The Bernhard Barracks are realized with a U-shaped floor plan especially for armored vehicles, at the training grounds “De Vlasakkers”. During World War II, the Luftwaffe uses the barracks, then called Waterloo Barracks, as a truck park. After liberation, training begins on the Sherman tank and later other tank models follow. In 2011, the Leopard 2 tanks are discontinued, but may soon return. Over the years, the barracks have grown into a large complex with over 140 buildings. The architecture varies: from traditional to modern. Contemporary architecture suits current needs. These include the School of Liaison Services, the Maneuver Education and Training Center, the Land Training Center and the Land Warfare Center. The Cavalry Museum is also located on the grounds.



16 **Officers' casino (1940-41), in use until 2014**
Kampweg 51, Soesterberg
Hanns Schiffers

The Officers' Casino is a recreational clubhouse for officers. It was built by order of the Luftwaffe, which used the nearby “Fliegerhorst Soesterberg” as a bomber base. Forced laborers were used for the construction. The marble of the ballroom comes from Italy via Mussolini. Below this hall are the command cellars of the Luftwaffe. The structure is one of the few examples of Nazi architecture in our country, in this case the “Heimatstil”. This is evident in its rustic appearance, its symmetrical facade, the segmental arches above the window openings and the wooden shutters for the windows in the side wings, among other things. Yet the casino has an asymmetrical, functional floor plan, lacks classicist style features, and its hipped roofs resemble those of Dutch barracks of the 1930s. Beginning in 1947, it was used by the Air Medical Service and later housed Air Force officers. In 2019, the National Real Estate Agency sold the casino. It will be converted into a residential care complex.



17 **Kamp Amersfoort (1939)**
National Monument Kamp Amersfoort (2021)
Loes van Overeemlaan 19
museum design by Inbo, Juurlink and Geluk and Tinker imagineers

Kamp Amersfoort is a place with a fraught history. It is built in 1939 as a military camp for Dutch soldiers. A year later, Nazis take over the camp and use it as a punishment and transit camp. Over 45,000 people are imprisoned and put to work here during World War II. After the war, the camp was renamed “De Boskamp barracks” and soldiers were trained for deployment to the Dutch East Indies (until 1949). Later demobilization of returning soldiers took place here (until 1951). The largely underground museum at Kamp Amersfoort National Monument makes history tangible. Memory and reflection are central to the museum design that has been awarded the Stadsbouwprijs Amersfoort 2022 by FASadE.



18 **Dienst der Genie (1949)**
Bilderdijklaan 1
Architect J.H. Oosterhuis

For many years, this building has been the workplace of the architects and civil engineers working for the Department of Defense at the Corps of Engineers. It is a good example of modern reconstruction architecture. The apartment building rose on the ruins of a burned pre-war villa. The plastered facade camouflages the differences between the stones of the pre-war ruin and the post-war new construction. Because the Berg was considered a “distinctly residential neighborhood” at the time, a building permit is granted for a residential flat with five dwellings. Subsequently, client N.V. Polynorm receives permission to use the residential flat as an office building for a maximum of five years. Even after those five years, the building remains in use as for a long time.



19 **Pelita (1954)**
Barchman Wuytierslaan 76-80 and Groen van Prinstererlaan 42-46
Architect Becker Henrar

The first apartment building on the Berg was commissioned by the Pelita Foundation to house widows of KNIL soldiers. Stichting Pelita provides financial assistance and housing for war victims from the Dutch East Indies and was founded in 1947 by Jantina Eckenhausen-Tetzner. She came to the Netherlands as a war widow with her children without a pension or other income. She receives the starting capital for Pelita from the Dutch East Indies from Lieutenant Governor General H.J. van Mook. The name Pelita comes from an oil lamp that is served as a beacon in tropical nights along unlit roads and on mountain slopes.



20 **Royal Military Police Barracks (1956)**
Veldmaarschalk Montgomeryweg 2/Banningstraat, Soesterberg
Architect unknown to us

The State Police Barracks bears little resemblance to modern 1930s barracks in the immediate vicinity. The structure fits into the austere, traditionalist tradition of the Delft School style. Until April 1, 2007, the barracks were used by the Marechaussee. At the end of 2024, the Marechaussee will be moved to the National Tactical Command (LTC) at the former airbase in Soesterberg, which has been the national headquarters of the Marechaussee since 2016. The barracks may be released for redevelopment in the future in connection with redeployment of barracks sites by the defense force.



21

Residential neighborhood Apollo, Gemini, Mercury (as of 1974)
Street names refer to the American space program
American design, carried out by the municipality of Soest, in cooperation with military authorities.

During the Cold War, Americans come to support the European air force. In 1954 a squadron of fighter planes is stationed at Soesterberg Airfield. A squadron is an operational unit with aircraft and associated personnel. Housing the American families is not easy because of scarcity on the post-war housing market. In addition, the Dutch housing industry is at a standstill because of noise standards. Finally, starting in 1974, special neighborhoods were built for the Americans according to American design. Phenomena unknown to the Netherlands such as carports, two bathrooms per house and built-in barbecues were introduced here. In 1994 the Americans left Soesterberg and the homes went up for public sale.



22

Mac Drive (1987)
Huis ter Heide
Architect unknown to us

For Americans stationed at Soesterberg Air Base, it is nothing new, but for the Dutch it is: the opening of the very first drive-thru in the Netherlands is a sensation. McDonalds is a concept originally conceived by two Mc Donald brothers. Entrepreneur Ray Kroc then turned it into the global franchise business. While Dutch soldiers are required to wear their uniforms when going out at night, American soldiers, on the other hand, are not allowed to enter public places in army clothing. The McDrive is therefore practical, as it allows you to “eat out” in uniform anyway.



23

Technology Center Land (2024)
Note: not open to the public.
Architect: Dick van Wageningen Architects
landscape architect: H+N+S Landscape Architects

The new Technology Center Land (TCL) is a modern facility of the Royal Army. It replaces the Tankworkplace (1956) that stood here. The TCL is expected to be commissioned in 2028. Technically high-quality and innovative maintenance and further development of the ground-based equipment (think of vehicles) will take place here. Clever use has been made of the natural difference in height to separate logistical flows. A generous, sturdy entrance bridge across the logistical routes creates not only a safe but also a monumental entrance with the signature of the defense force. Around the new building, new woodland, heath and sparse grassland will be created, restoring the historic relationship with the adjacent Leusderheide. Inside the building are patios with forest and heathland plantings. These patios play an important role in ventilating and cooling the building.

Colofon:

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- Maarten van Rossem De Podcast, episode Belgenmonument