



BOMBARDEMENT
BEZUIDENHOUT '45

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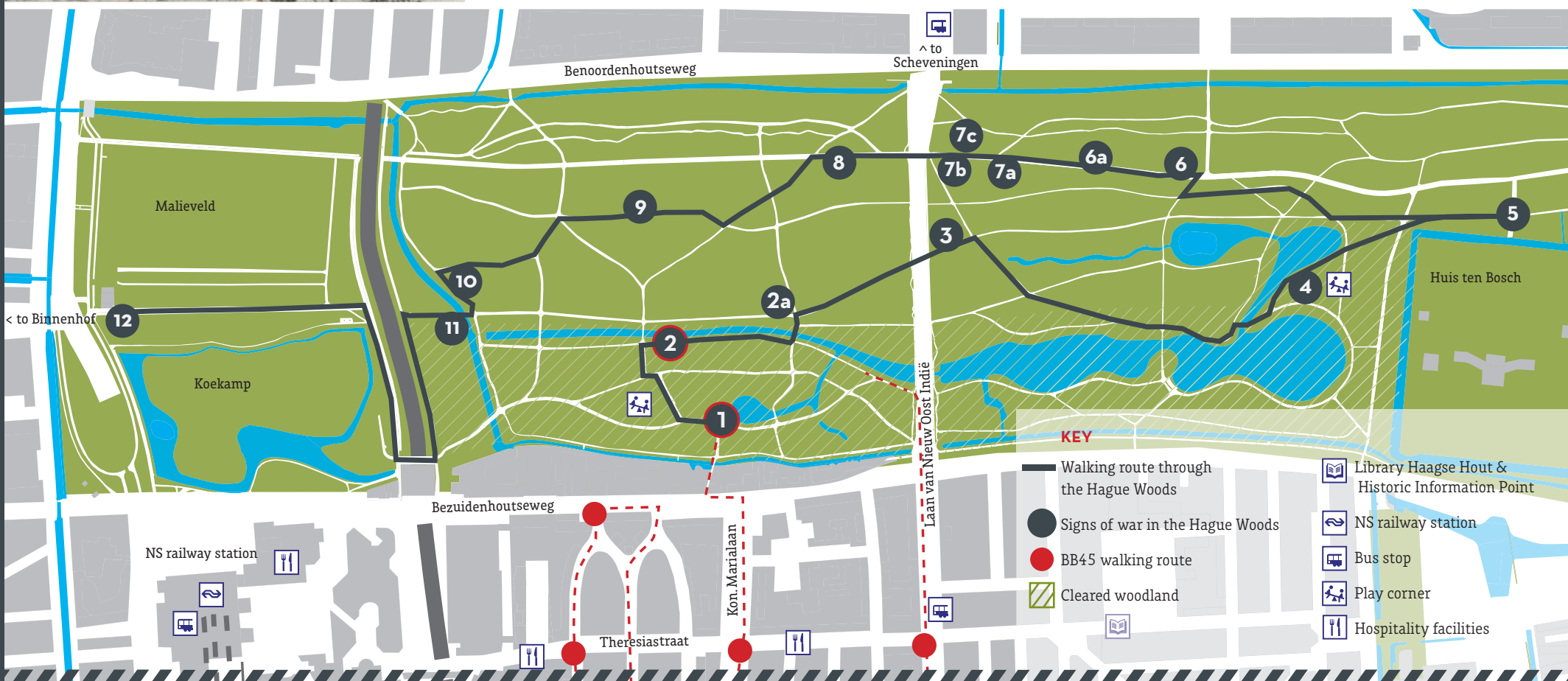
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LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF WAR IN THE HAGUE WOODS

The Haagse Bod (the Hague Woods) is a very old wood that has been used and lived in by the Counts of Holland and members of the House of Orange. The woods were confiscated by the German army during the Second World War. Between 1941 and 1943, the German army built a line of defence along the coast - the Atlantic Wall - consisting of bunkers, anti-tank ditches, barbed wire, walls and guns. They also did this in the Hague. Many houses and other buildings were demolished and trees were cleared to achieve this. A large part of the city became a forbidden area, 'Sperrgebiet'. In the city, the Atlantic Wall came right into the Hague Woods. The Germans would fire their V2 rockets at England from here. The allied forces wanted to obliterate these rockets with a large bombing raid on 3 March 1945. An error meant that the woods were not destroyed, but a large section of the Bezuidenhout neighbourhood. During this walk you will get to know the Hague Woods and the signs of war that are still visible. The route passes 12 locations where we will recount this story, with a quiz for young and old. The route will take approximately one hour and there are playground and hospitality facilities en route. The route connects to the walk through the neighbourhood about the Bombing of Bezuidenhout on 3 March 1945. (www.bb45.nl/en)

Have fun!

Stichting 3 maart '45 and Stichting Europees Erfgoed Atlantikwall



LOOKING FOR SIGNS OF WAR IN THE HAGUE WOODS

1 WALTER BOER MEADOWS

The Sociëteit de Witte has had a bandstand here since 1830, where concerts are given by the Royal Military Band. Lots of people came here to listen. The director was Walther Boer. He was arrested during the war and was sent to a German Nazi concentration and extermination Camp in occupied Poland. He played music there to keep the people going. The German army demolished the bandstand and cleared the surrounding trees during the construction of the Atlantic Wall in 1943.

Question 1: why did the Germans clear the trees around the meadow?

- A. To enable more people to listen to the wartime entertainment.
- B. To have a clear field of fire during an attack.
- C. For fuel.

2 ANTI-TANK DITCH AND GUN BUNKER

This ditch was part of the line of defence during the war. It currently looks just like a normal ditch, but at the time it was very wide (20m) and deep (3.5m) with steep sides. It would trap every type of tank. There was also a gun near the ditch, hidden in a bunker (2a), to fire on the tanks.

Question 2: what was the purpose of the anti-tank ditch?

- A. To stop the tanks of the allied forces.
- B. To store freshwater.
- C. To serve as a fish pond to provide food.

3 ANTI-TANK GUN BUNKER WITH FIELD REINFORCEMENTS

There was a gun in the middle of the road near the pedestrian crossing. The barrel was aimed at the Laan van NOI, which at the time was an important inland access road for the Hague. The gun was connected to another bunker in the woods.

Question 3: why was the gun aimed inland and not out to sea?

- A. As an obstacle, so the residents of Bezuidenhout could not get to the woods and near the V2 rockets.
- B. Against the residents of Scheveningen who wanted to return to their houses.
- C. For protection against an attack from the allied forces over this road.



4 ANIMALS IN THE WOODS

The Hague Woods is very old and was part of woods that originally stretched to Harlem. The Counts of Holland and the royal House of Orange have been regular visitors for centuries. In the 17th century, the Counts used the woods for hunting. There were lots of wild animals and birds in the woods. The House of Orange saw it primarily as a park and installed an English garden with large lakes, which they could skate on in the winter.

Question 4: what sort of food did people look for in the woods during the war?

- A. Deer and pheasants.
- B. Squirrels and rabbits.
- C. Hazelnuts and flower bulbs.

5 HUIS TEN BOSCH

The first residents of the Hague Woods were Stadtholder Frederik Hendrik and his wife Amalia van Solms. They built a summerhouse in the woods next to their palace in 1645. In subsequent years the house became a prison, a museum, a brothel, and from 1815, the residence of the House of Orange. During the war, the Germans wanted to demolish the palace for the Atlantic Wall, but that didn't happen. The palace will soon be lived in again by the House of Orange.

Question 5: why did the Germans want to demolish the Huis ten Bosch?

- A. As revenge for the escape of Queen Wilhelmina.
- B. To continue the anti-tank ditch.
- C. As building materials for bunkers.

6 LEIDSESTRAATWEG

This cobbled street dates from the 13th century and was the national trunk road from 's Gravenzande to Leiden. You will find old, cast iron kilometre markers and concrete hectometre markers, that mark the distance from the Binnenhof (the Dutch parliament). It used to be very busy with carriages travelling back and forth. Now it is only open to residents and visitors to the Huis ten Bosch. The road was repaired after the war using cobbles from the rubble of Bezuidenhout.

Question 6: the letters 'RG' are on the back of the concrete pillar, opposite lamppost 98-99. What do these letters stand for?

- A. Rijks Gebied (state territory): the road is part of the Huis ten Bosch palace, which is owned by the government.
- B. Regio Gebied (regional territory): the road was an important regional road.
- C. Recreatie gebied (recreational territory): the road provided access to the hunting territory.

7 BUNKERS

The German soldiers lived in the bunkers. There was the accommodation bunker (7b), but also a kitchen (7a), and a munitions store (7c). They wanted the bunkers removed as soon as possible after the war, but it was too expensive to demolish all of them. So they buried them in sand to enable a new wood to eventually grow over them.

Question 7: why did the Germans sleep in the bunkers and not in the barracks nearby?

- A. There was not enough room to sleep in the barracks.
- B. The soldiers were used to camping.
- C. To shelter from the bombing and to get to the guns quickly during an attack.

8 V2 ROCKET LAUNCH SITE

The Germans used the woods as cover for launching the V2 rockets towards London. The trees remained in this part of the woods so the rockets wouldn't attract attention. The V2 rockets were launched from a large vehicle, which they drove to this site. As the woods were in the middle of the city, the allied forces were unable to destroy the rockets without causing civilian casualties. Despite this, they tried to bomb it on 3 March 1945, aiming for the Leidsestraat - but it went dramatically wrong.

Question 8: how long was a V2 rocket?

- A. 3 metres
- B. 9 metres
- C. 14 metres



9 DUNES IN THE CITY

There were no bunkers in this part of the woods. The hills are actually old dunes, because the North Sea reached up to here during the ice age. These trees were not cleared during the war.

Question 9: how old do you think these trees are?

- A. 70 years
- B. 300 years
- C. 1000 years

10 DUAL ON BLOOD HILL

The open area on the hill is called 'blood hill' because it has seen a lot of fighting over the centuries. Rebels fought here against the Spanish soldiers during the Eighty Years' War. Later criminals were executed here - the hill gave the watching crowds a good view. Duels with swords or pistols were fought here between officers or nobility, sometimes for the favours of a beautiful woman.

Question 10: how would someone be challenged to a duel?

- A. By one person throwing a glove at the feet of his opponent.
- B. Through an orderly (a messenger) in the army.
- C. By the woman being fought over throwing a white handkerchief.

11 LOOKOUT TREE

There is a special tree in the woods. German soldiers stood on guard near the anti-tank ditch. One of the soldiers was near this tree (over the bridge and to the left). Either from boredom or love for his German ruler, he carved a drawing of Hitler and a swastika in the tree (see high above the cut off branch).

Question 11: why is the drawing so high in the tree?

- A. During the war, the drawing was low down in the tree but has moved higher after 70 years of growth.

- B. The soldier stood on a watchtower next to the tree.
- C. The soldier stood high on a branch to get as good a view as possible.

From here you can walk to one of the other Bunker Day locations such as the Historical Museum of the Hague, or to the station via 12.

12 MALIEVELD AND 'POFFERTJES' STAND

The Hague Woods stretches right into the city centre. Centuries ago there were also trees on the open area, the Malieveld. To preserve the woods, a tree preservation order (the Redemption Act) was enacted in the 16th century, which is still applicable. The Malieveld Pavilion, a 'poffertjes' (tiny pancakes) stand, stood on Scheveningen beach until 1941. The beach stands had to be removed to construct the Atlantic Wall and so the stand was moved to this location. During the 1944/1945 winter of starvation, the people of the Hague could get a portion of 'poffertjes' by handing in a bread coupon. The pavilion had all sorts of seating areas, which was ideal for spies. The beach stand was to be returned to Scheveningen after the war but Queen Wilhelmina decided to keep the pavilion where it was.

Question 12: do you know where the name 'Malieveld' comes from?

- A. Malie is a ballgame that used to be played on the field beside the pavilion.
- B. Malie is the name of Mediaeval tree that used to grow here.
- C. The trees on the Malieveld were used to construct the city wall against the Spanish. The city wall was called the 'Malie'.

Answers: 1B, 2A, 3C, 4C, 5B, 6A, 7C, 8C, 9B, 10A, 11C, 12A.
See www.BB45.nl for more information.