

# The WWII Y-Peiler Station *Atlantik II* and the Penmarc'h German Military Installations

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## Abstract

This article aims to give value to the passionate researchers which, with their search on the field, discovered the rests, nowadays disappeared, of the *Y-Peiler Atlantik II*. After having evocated the historical situation of Penmarc'h (Finistère) during the WWII and the Penmarc'h German military installations, the article evocates the details of the discovery of the *Atlantik II* rests and their characteristics. The *Atlantik I* and *Atlantik II* similarities are discussed and a possible vision of the Pointe de Penmarc'h during the WWII with the radar *FuMO 3* superimposed on the Vieux Phare is proposed. It is hoped that this article can form the basis for further studies on *Atlantik II* and the historical situation of Penmarc'h during the WWII.

## Keywords

WWII, *Y-Peiler*, *FuSan 756*, *Atlantik II*, Bunkers, Bretagne, Finistère, La Madeleine, Penmarc'h

## 1. Introduction

It was during the preparation of an article dealing with the *Y-Peiler* coded *FuSan 424/Atlantik I Y UKW* near Pludalmézeau (Tomezzoli, 2024, in press), that Mr. Henoff informed me about the existence, during the WWII, of another *Y-Peiler* coded *Atlantik II* near Penmarc'h (Finistère) and the discovery of its rests by three passionate researchers.

## 2. Historical Context

According to the witness of Mr. Auguste Dupouy (KBC Penmarch, 2023), the Germans arrived by trucks on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1940. They ended their invasion of the Finistère (Pen ar Bed) in Saint Guénolé en Penmarc'h. They arrived at the same

time as the doryphores beetles, potato pest, and they acquired this nickname. From 20<sup>th</sup> June, the *Abschnittskommandant* Fritz Jahn ordered to set the clocks to the German summer time, namely to advance the clocks by one hour and the same day, just before the signing of the Armistice, a list of prohibitions was posted almost everywhere. This list, which was almost identical throughout the entire French occupied territory, governed the rights and duties of the inhabitants in front of the *Wehrmacht* and the French Republic of Vichy. It will force residents to respect rules which will profoundly change their way of life. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the Armistice between Germany and France was signed.

The industrial and energetic sites of the Finistère came under the immediate protection of the *Wehrmacht*. The *Wehrmacht* placed here and there, on strategic sites in the countryside and along the coast, a few posts equipped with light weapons and deployed, almost everywhere, garrisons and soldiers' cantonments.

The defence post *Qu 301* at Saint Pierre in Penmarc'h hosted the *Feldkommandantur* at the Hôtel du Phare d'Eckmühl, built by Charles Miroux, Amieux Factory manager. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1940, seven soldiers were assigned to the Vieux Phare and the Eckmühl Lighthouse. They dug trenches in the courtyard of the Lighthouse and moved into the guards' official accommodations. They were part of the *Luftwaffe Feld Divisionen* for the *Flak (FLieger Abwehr Kanonen)* and of the *Kriegsmarine* for the radio installation and coastal surveillance from the Pointe de Penmarc'h, then also from the radar installed in 1944. A machine gun nest was positioned on the coast, East of the Penmarc'h port.

In 1941, a Forbidden Zone following the coastline from the North to the South-West was imposed on the inhabitants. This area was affected by additional prohibitions and constraints.

It was from 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1942, following the *Richtlinie 40 Küstenverteidigung* that began the *Atlantikwall* construction.

In March 1942, military exercises brought *Flak* and *Pak* together on the Steir beach. In August 1942, *Generalmajor* Von Zangen inspected the coastal defences of Penmarc'h. In this occasion, personnel and equipment were reviewed on the Steir beach.

*Qu 40* at la Torche peninsula North of Saint Guénolé, at the extreme South of the Audierne Bay, hosted a main commandment bunker storing a 75 mm gun turned to the Bay, a hangar storing two mobile *PAK* guns which could be deployed near the Bay or at Pors Carn, a *tobrouk* at the entrance towards the Bay and six other *tobrouks* armed with guns, one of them orientated towards Pors Carn. The soldiers were quartered in a shack located in close proximity to the commandment bunker. Three barbed lines and two mine fields, separated by the access road, protected *Qu 40*.

*Qu 41* at Saint Guénolé, in July 1940, hosted a *Heer* cavalry company which was engaged in embarkment and landing exercises in preparation for the Great Britain invasion. A rescue boat was requisitioned, of which the soldiers did not took much care. A 47 mm anti-tank gun managed by *Kriegsmarine* gunners protected the

southern part of Saint Guénolé, la Joie and the Lighthouse. The northern part did not need protection, the coast being too dangerous for a landing. Only an intermittent observation post existed at Viben, held by the *GAST* (German Customs) and opening onto the coast. The nickname *GAST* in Breton had also the meaning of whore. Saint Guénolé was also a tourist hotspot for the occupier.

*Qu 44* in Poulguen quartered the students of the *Luftwaffe Flakartilleriechule* and the *Heer Pakartillerieschule*. A 50 mm *KwK* anti-tank gun was located on the edge of Steir beach on the Guilvinec side.

Other defence posts were at La Joie *Qu 42*, Kérity *Qu 43*, Langourougan *Qu 45*.

On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1944 and early May 1944, on the Poulguen dune in Penmarch, near said artillery gun, 1500 m from the Chateau of Steir-Poulguen, took place the execution of prisoners of the Saint Charles prison in Quimper. On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1944, their mass grave returned 35 bodies.

USAF reconnaissance aircrafts were spying on the installations of the *Qu 42* at La Joie and *Qu 301*. On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, the Allied forces landed in Normandy. At the beginning of August 1944, German soldiers searched and requisitioned every bicycle in preparation for their departure. The Lighthouse and its engine room were mined, which made residents fear the worst and on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1944 the Germans left Penmarc'h for the Pocket of Lorient.

Only the *Kommandantur* of *QU 301* in Saint Pierre and the Hôtel du Phare d'Eckmühl got blown up (KBC Penmarch, 2023).

### 3. The Y-Peiler Atlantik II

**Table 1** lists the German radars and Y-Peilers (Trenkle, 1979) near Penmarc'h.

**Table 1.** List of radars and *Y-Peilers* near Penmarc'h (Lippmann, 2021).

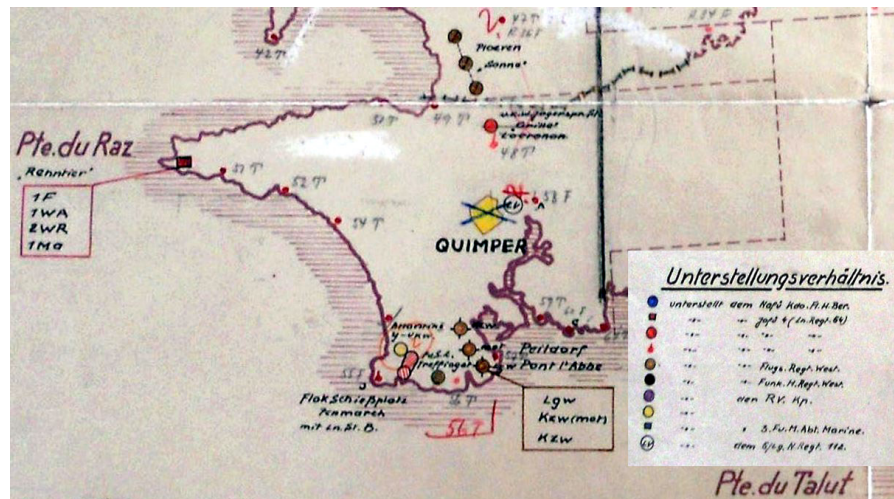
<i>ID F3</i>	<i>Typ</i>	<i>Ort</i>	<i>Einheit</i>	<i>Ausstattung</i>
755	<i>FuMO</i>	Penmarc'h	<i>Teile 31.Fu.M.Kp</i>	1 × <i>FuMO 3</i> <i>Calais Zerstörer</i> <i>Seetaktische FuMO</i> ( <i>Zerstörerdrehsäule</i> )
1488	<i>FuSAn</i>	Kerellec		1 × <i>Y-Peiler</i>
756	<i>FuSAn</i>	La Madeleine		1 × <i>Y-Peiler</i>
757	<i>FuSAn</i>	Lescors		1 × <i>Y-Peiler</i>
761	<i>FuSAn</i>	Le Guilvinec-West		1 × <i>Y-Peiler</i>

According to KBC Penmarch (2023), the Penmarc'h *FuMO* comprised a *FuMO 3 Calais Zerstörer (Zerstörerdrehsäule)* (368 MHz, 8 KW, 7 - 12 Km) located at the top of the Vieux Phare and a *FuSAn* comprising a *Y-Peiler*, the *FuMG* of La Madeleine comprised a *FuSE 80 Freya A/N Egon* and a *FuSAn* comprising a *Y-Peiler*.

The map Morlaix Airfield area Airfields and Ln facilities (Figure 1) of 14<sup>th</sup>

August 1943 (Henoff, 2023) confirms the presence of this last *Y-Peiler* and indicates it as *Atlantik II* near Penmarc'h. On the map, *Atlantik II* is encircled in orange and indicated with a question mark.

*Atlantik II* should not be confused with the *Funksendezentralen Atlantik* in Guichen (Tomezzoli et al., 2014).



**Figure 1.** Positions of *Renntier* (Tomezzoli, 2021) at the Pointe du Raz, *Atlantik II* marked unassigned with a yellow dot encircled by a yellow circle and question mark, *Flakschießplatz* Penmarc'h with *Ln St O*, *FuSA Treffjäger* and *Peildorf* Pont l'Abbé.

The *Rhubarb Operations* (1944) (Figure 2) describes *FuSan 756 Atlantik II* as follows: “1.ii) Pin point 47°49'24"N. 4°19'30"W. Grid ref: 017357. 3.i) On rising ground 1 mile N.E of the small town of PENMARCH, at the base of the promontory which terminate in the POINTE de PENMARCH. Approximately midway between the ANSE de la TORCHE on the N.W. and the port of GUILVINEC. 3.ii) Altitude, about 80 feet (~23.3 m) above the sea level. 4.i) The target consists of a single open wooden lattice tower, 60 feet (~18 m) high and tapering towards a 16 foot (~5 m) square platform at the top. Vulnerable points are the square cabin below and the cylindrical D/F room above the platform. 4.ii) About 600 yards (~548.6 m) to the N.N.W. of this tower and connected to it by underground cable is a semi-sunken building measuring 108' × 43' (~2.7 × 1 m). 100 yds (~91 m) to the W.S.W of this building is the usual small transmitter hut with its 80 ft. (~24 m) high mast. 4.iii.) Hedge around the tower but otherwise there are no defences within its immediate vicinity. At the large building a few slit trenches have been dug with a few weapon pits. 4.iv) Layout and immediate surroundings are shown on A.C.I.U. Plan No. G.160. Neg No. 38914R” (Figure 2).

In the text 108' × 43' appears wrong, probably 108 × 43 ft (33 × 13 m) was intended.

#### 4. The Visit

Messrs Bruno Schavsinski, Yves Blanchard and Jacques Morvan visited the

*Atlantik II* site on 08<sup>th</sup> September 2012. The *Atlantik II* identified components were the following (Figure 3).

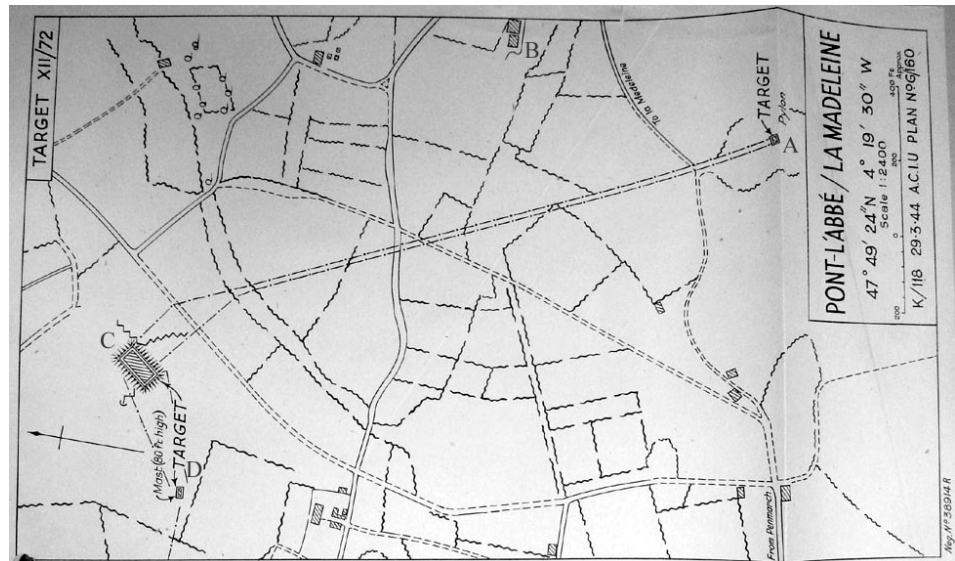


Figure 2. K/118 29.3.44 A.C.I.U. Plan N°. G/160 - A, C-D FuSan 756 components; B La Madeleine.



(a)



(b)



(c)



**Figure 3.** *Atlantik II* Pylon concrete bases: (a) General view; (b) Concrete base 01; (c) Concrete base 02; (d) Concrete base 03; (e) Concrete base 04 (Courtesy Mr. Morvan).

The Pylon emplacement A comprising:

- 01) a concrete base ( $47^{\circ}49.383'N$ ,  $004^{\circ}19.431'W$ ) buried in the terrain, only the upper surface was visible. Its dimensions were difficult to estimate. The upper surface let visible a slanted, rusted threaded screw on one side and the pebbles of the Ero Vili (Tomezzoli & Marzin, 2015).

- 02) a  $\sim 60 \times 60$  cm concrete base ( $47^{\circ}49.382'N$ ,  $004^{\circ}19.426'W$ ) severely degraded, emerging from the terrain. Only one side preserved part of the external concrete covering. The exposed portions let visible the pebbles of the Ero Vili. On the upper surface were two slanted, rusted threaded screws.

- 03) a  $\sim 65 \times 65$  cm concrete base ( $47^{\circ}49.388'N$ ,  $004^{\circ}19.432'W$ ) severely degraded, emerging from the terrain. The exposed portions let visible the pebbles of the Ero Vili. In the centre of the upper surface was a 10 cm circular hole, on a corner, a bent, rusted, about 30 cm long, threaded screw and a 10 x 10 cm square hole on the other corner.

- 04) a  $\sim 60 \times 60$  cm concrete base ( $47^{\circ}49.386'N$ ,  $004^{\circ}19.433'W$ ) in a good preservation state, slightly emerging from the terrain. In the centre of the upper surface was a 10 cm circular hole and one rusted threaded screw on each one of two opposed corners. The exposed portions let visible the pebbles of the Ero Vili.

The concrete bases were disposed at the corners of a square having 6.90 m long sides and 9.80 m long diagonal. Originally, the top square surface of each concrete base comprised: a 10 cm square hole on a corner for a threaded screw, a 20 cm square hole on the opposite corner for a threaded screw and a circular 10 cm hole in the middle.

On the terrain, among the concrete bases, the possible imprint of the square Range Measuring Cabin was visible.

To the North, neither the semi-sunken building B nor the rests of shacks were found at the location where actually a horse-riding club is located. Rests of the transmitter hut and the transmission mast were not found.

The Pylon A was burnt down by the German soldiers in retreat in summer 1944. The concrete bases 01) - 04) were destroyed in 2013 when the fields were sown.

## 5. Discussion

*Atlantik II* had the same structure of *Atlantik I*: A) a wooden lattice tower (*Heinrich*), C) a semi-sunken building, and D) a nearby hut and mast (Hans). The wooden lattice tower was positioned at La Madeleine which is located in the larger district of Lescors. Therefore, Lescors and La Madeleine are two names used to indicate the same position. Consequently, one of the two identifications *FuSAn 756* or *FuSAn 757* (Lippmann, 2021) is probably in excess.

Jones (2009) tells the Y-system historical development, its fighter driving method and the countermeasure Domino by which the British arrived to impair its functioning.

Felkin (1944a) describes devices used in the *Y-Peyler* transmitter unit, the D/F equipment and the range-measuring unit.

Felkin (1944b), after having resumed the Y-fighter interception control methods, observes that: “35. A ‘Y’ control station requires nine men per shift, or 27/30 men per 24 hours, for its operation [...]. The personnel of the ‘Y’ control station is distributed as follows: Transmitter hut: One operator. D/F Cabin: D/F Operator and log-book keeper. Range-Measuring Cabin: A Supervisor, range-measurer and log-book keeper. Plotting Room: Plotter (friendly plots), plotter (enemy-plots) and plotting officer”.

The necessity to host the plotting room and the 27/30 men lodgements explains the relatively large dimensions (33 × 13 m) of the semi-sunken building C.

*Atlantik II*, as well as *Atlantik I* and *Lgw: Anl* near *Dora* is indicated with a yellow circle (Figure 2) and the *Unterstellungsverhältnis* (Subordination relationship) shows on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1943 no subordinate relationship. The orange circle and the question mark around *Atlantik II*, as well as around *Atlantik I* and *Lgw: Anl* near *Dora*, probably indicated that, at said date, these stations were not yet operational or in construction. Because it had to drive day and night fighters, *Atlantik II*, as well as *Atlantik I*, were intended to be dependent from *Luftwaffe*.



**Figure 4.** Possible vision of the Pointe de Penmarc’h during the WWII, on the left Chapelle Saint Pierre, in the middle Vieux Phare with the radar *FuMO 3* superimposed, on the right Eckmühl Lighthouse.

The position of *Atlantik II* on the South of the Finistère (**Figure 1**) was probably intended for driving German day and night fighters over the Biscay Bay.

The information provided by KBC Penmarch (2023) and Lippmann (2021) permits to proceed to a reconstruction (**Figure 4**) of the possible vision of the Pointe de Penmarc'h during the WWII.

## 6. Conclusion

The visits on the field permitted to determine that, unfortunately, all the components of *Atlantik II* disappeared. However, as usual in historical researches, further issues remain to be solved: the possible operative state of *Atlantik II* reached after 20<sup>th</sup> September 43, its possible subordinate relationship after that date, the possible missions accomplished. It is hoped that this article could form the basis for further studies on *Atlantik II* and the historical situation of Penmarc'h during the WWII.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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