

The WWII German Station of Roc'h Trévélzel Near Commana (Finistère-FR)

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Abstract

In this article the history of the Commana municipality and the vicissitudes of the Commana sector during the WWII are evoked. The Rhubarb Operations-Appendix V of 7.7.41 and the study of post-WWII French air-reconnaissance images permitted the determination of the position of the WWII German station of Roc'h Trévélzel near Commana. The visits on the site permitted the identification of the emplacements of its components, the determination of their preservation state and to proceed to a hypothetical reconstruction of the station. It is hoped that this article will propagate the knowledge of this station among an interested public, that it can form the basis for further studies on the station and that it could promote a more certain legal status and cultural recovery of its site.

Keywords

WWII, Finistère, Commana, Roc'h Trévélzel, Wotan II, Rhubarb, Conflict Archaeology, Contemporary Archaeology

1. Introduction

Some linguists assert that the municipality of Commana (Finistère-FR) derives its name from the Breton terms “cum” (valley) or “komm” (trough) and Anna in honour of Saint Anne.

Some historians however, believe that Commana derive from the Breton term “Koumanant” or “Kemeuned,” meaning fief.

The parish of Commana was mentioned in documents of the early XI century. Local traditions assert that the church of Commana was built on the place where a stone trough (in Breton, “komm”) containing a statue of Saint Anne was discovered. In the Middle Ages, to encourage the agricultural development of the Monts d'Arrée, the Relecq Abbey established the “quévaise” a collective land exploitation

system. This system attracted paysans seeking new opportunities. The attracted populations developed a sentiment of resistance to the civil authorities and an egalitarian and rebellious identity. The Hospitallers knights of Saint John of Jerusalem of the nearby parish of La Feuillée (Tomezzoli, 2025) established a commandery in Commana, at a place called Kaerformérit, mentioned in the 1160 Duke Conan IV charter. They also established at Mougault, one km South of Commana, on the Quimper-Morlaix Road, an alms-house with a chapel. In 1170, Conan IV, allied of King Henry II of England, won the Battle of Commana against the Viscount of Léon Guiomarch IV.

In the years 1920-1930, the Monts d'Arrée, south of Commana, were one of the areas of development of the French Communist Party (InfoBretagne.com, 2025; Chartier, 2022).

2. Historical Context

In May and June 1940, after several months of the “drole de guerre”, the French and British armies were defeated by a rapid German offensive. The British army retreated towards Brest, destroying or abandoning tons of equipment before the *Wehrmacht* arrival in the Commana sector on 17th June. Much of the abandoned equipment was stored at Saint-Thégonnec, a municipality about twelve km from Commana. However, weapons, ammunition, and materials were hidden by paysans and communist sympathizers, in preparation of future combats. The Trédudon-le-Moine village, about nine km from Commana, was selected as hidden weapon depot and meeting place for local communist leaders for preparing resistance after the ban of the French Communist Party in the summer of 1940.

The 4. *Kompanie* of the 10. *Luftnachrichten-Regiment* (Unity L27 717) arrived in Commana in October 1940 in charge of the installations of Roc'h Trévél on the Monts d'Arrée, south of Commana.

The 251. *Infanterie-Division* was in the North Finistère from 1st Juillet 1940 to Avril 1941 to relieve the German invading troops.

The 6. *Fahr-Kolonne* (Unity 38 032) quartered in Commana from November 1940. Its soldiers were lodged at the girls' school. It moved to Sizun on February 1941. On January 1941, the Commana municipality was electrified for the needs of the *Wehrmacht*.

On 22nd June 1941 the *Wehrmacht* invaded the Soviet Union. From then on, many communists engaged themselves in the Resistance movement within the *Franco-Tireurs et Partisans (FTP)*. From the summer of 1941 onwards, they attacked the local Vichy regime personnel and institutions.

The 257. *Infanterie-Division* engaged on the East front was resting in the Finistère from September 1942 to April 1943. The 12. *Batterie* of its 257. *Artillerie-Regiment* (Unity 38 503D) quartered in Commana from the 2nd September to 21st October 1942 before leaving for Locmaria-Plouzané. In the same period, its 257. *Nachschub-Kompanie* (Unity 31 312) quartered in Commana before to leave for Châteaulin.

The 113. *Infanterie-Division*, annihilated at Stalingrad on February 1943, was reconstituted in the Finistère from March to July 1943. From June to Juillet 1943, the 3. *Kompanie* of its 268. *Bataillon* (Unity 32 244D) quartered in Commana.

The 353. *Infanterie-Division* formed in Brittany in October 1943 was present in the Finistère from 20th October 1943 to 8th Juin 1944 to strengthen the German coastal defense system. The 12. *Batterie* of its 353. *Artillerie-Regiment* (Unity 18 012D) was in Commana from January to March 1944.

Allied airmen shot down during air raids on Brittany were hidden in the Commana sector and passed through Trédudon-le-Moine village before to reach the rescue points. The village also served as refuge for Resistance members, whose numbers increased substantially in 1943 after the introduction in France of the *Service de Travail Obligatoire (STO)*. It is estimated that almost all of the young farmers of the Monts Arrée were sympathizers or engaged in the Resistance movements. Many resistants were employed in the Brest arsenal or the pyrotechnics factory in Pont-de-Buis near Brest bringing with them their experience in managing communications and explosives.

In January 1944, a German captain and his attendant, both on horseback, were killed at Goenidou in Berrien, eleven km from Commana. In February 1944, German troops conducted a major operation in the Berrien sector, which resulted in 22 people executed, 16 deported, 11 killed in action, and one missing.

The 3. *Fallschirm-Division* arrived in Brittany as reinforcement in March 1944. On 6th Juin 1944 it leaved Brittany for Normandy. One *Kompanie* of its 8. *Regiment* was quartered in Commana from end of March to 6th June 1944. Two paratroopers died in Commana on 10th April 1944.

The 2. *Fallschirm-Division*, returned from Russia in May 1944, arrived mid-June 1944 incomplete in the Finistère. The headquarters of the 1. *Bataillon* of its 7. *Fallschirm-Regiment* (Unity L52 326) was quartered in Commana and to a place-named Restancaroff in July 1944 together with certainly one *Kompanie*. The paratroopers were keeping watch of the area of Roc'h Trévél.

Commana was liberated on 7th August 1944.

It is said that in the years 1940s weapons were buried near Trédudon-le-Moine, after the Liberation, in anticipation of a possible communist putsch (Chartier, 2022; Floch, 2012).

3. The WWII German Base of Roc'h Trévél

The map Flughafenbereich Morlaix-Flugplätze und Ln Anlagen (Henoff, 2023) dated 14.8.43, is silent about a WWII German military station at Roc'h Trévél. The DAWA registers (Lippmann, 2023a, 2023b) are also silent about this station.

The station is described by the *Rhubarb Operations (1941a)* (Target V/1) as follows:

“1) Map References:

a) Map No. G.S.G.S. 4040B. Sheet 58 S.W.

b) Pin Point 48° 24'13"N. 3° 55'18"W. Grid ref: 371974. [...]

2) Photographs:

a) P.R.U. Sorties: W/828, No. 955-956-957. 7.7.1941. Neg.No.4215.

3) Position:

a) Target is approximately 24 miles from the coast due South from ST. POL DE LEON on top of the MONTAGNE D'ARREE ridge. It lies 1^{1/2} miles W.S.W. of the point of intersection of two main roads and a railway and between two parallels roads running N.E. and S.W. A landmark consisting of a tall pinnacle of rock named "ROC TREVEZEL" stands about 450 yards S.E. of the station.

b) This target is on the same ridge and a little more than 1^{3/4} miles to the West South West of the LA FEUILLEE station (Target V/2).

4) Description:

a) Target consists of two huts, each supporting an aerial array similar in appearance to that shown in diagram No.1. each hut is protected by a circular or octagonal blast wall.

b) A few isolated small buildings, some protected by blast wall, are connected to each other and to the installation by buried cables.

c) Layout and immediate surroundings are shown in the C.I.U. Plan No. 1045A."

The *Rhubarb Operations (1941b)* dealing with the WWII German station Y8 near La Feuillée (Tomezzoli, 2025) confirms that "... This target [Y8] is on the same ridge as COMMANA station (Target V/1) and about 1 miles (sic) E.N.E."

4. The Visits

The images (**Figure 1**, **Figure 2**) of the *Rhubarb Operations (1941a)* (Target V/1), the pin point of the Roc'h Trévél station (*Rhubarb Operations, 1941a*) and the IGNF air reconnaissance image of 23rd May 1952 (**Figure 3**), permitted the localization of the station and its components at about four km from Commana, and to prepare the visits which took place on 18th October 2025 and 08th November 2025. The IGNF air reconnaissance image (**Figure 3**) shows other details not identified in **Figure 1**, **Figure 2** but present on a previous IGNF image: IGNF_PVA_1-0_1948-04-16_C3639-0431_1948_MISSIONBRETAGNE9_0170 of inferior quality. The site actually appeared covered by grass, bushes and ferns vegetation letting its access and exploration difficult. However, the station identified emplacements were the following (**Figure 2**, **Figure 3**):

A light A.A. gun emplacement (48°24'13.75"N, 3°55'23.05"W, height 322.19 m) (**Figure 1**) disappeared; therefore, it was not possible to determine their preservation state.

A light A.A. gun emplacement (possible) (48°24'18.72"N, 3°55'5.13"W, h. 328.62 m) (**Figure 1**) disappeared; therefore, it was not possible to determine their preservation state.

An access road 1 (48°24'9.49"N, 3°55'4.09"W, h. 345.9 m) (**Figure 4**) still existing, in good preservation state.

A ~7 x 3,5 m emplacement 2 (48°24'10.67"N, 3°55'5.09"W, h. 346.25 m) covered

by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A ~1 x 1 m emplacement 3 ($48^{\circ}24'10.93''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'4.86''\text{W}$, h. 346.33 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

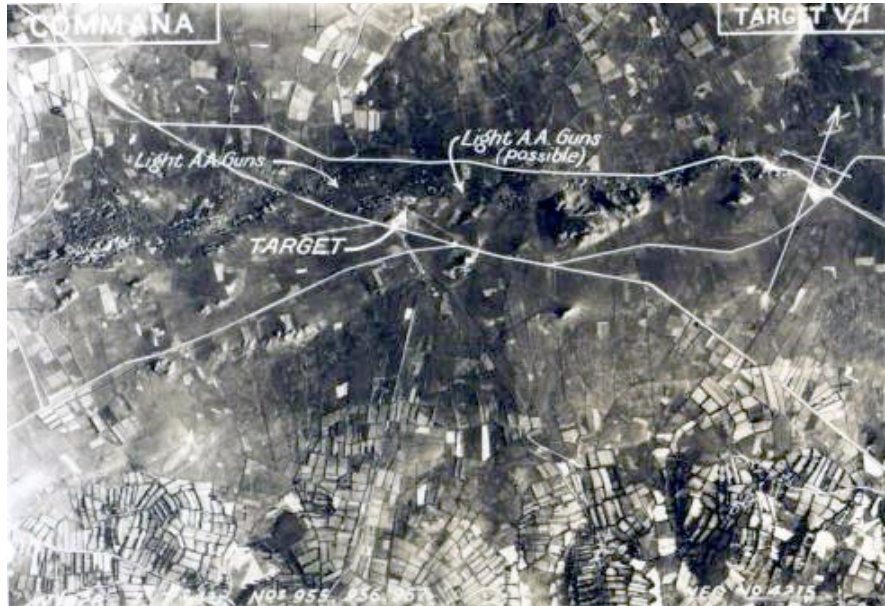


Figure 1. Roc'h Trévél station—Target V/1, W/828, No. 955-956-957. 7.7.1941. Neg. No. 4215, station between two parallels roads running N.E. and S.W. and the pinnacle of Roc'h Trévél (Rhubarb Operations, 1941a).

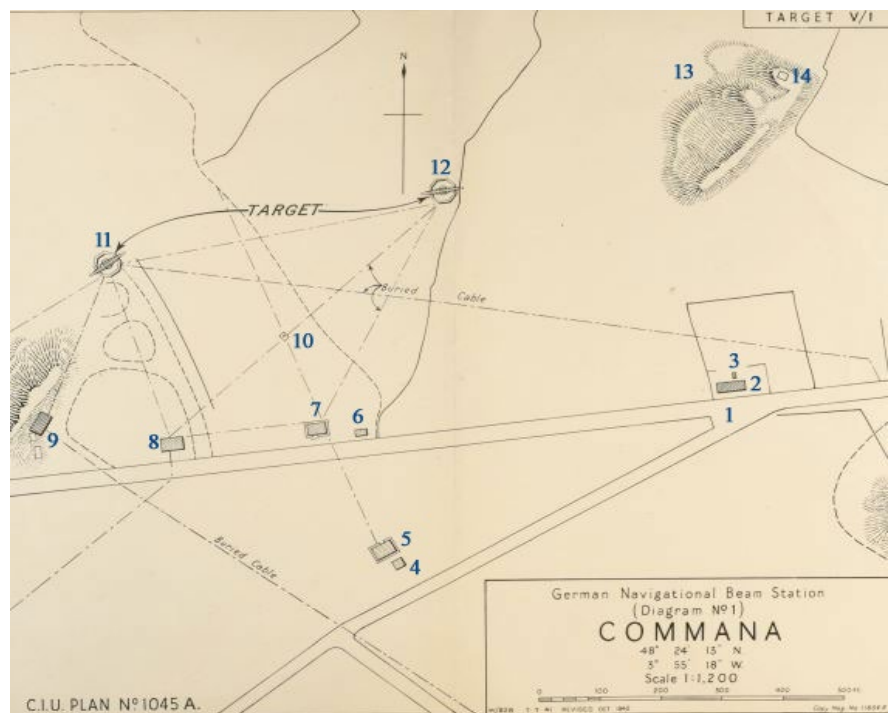


Figure 2. Diagram N°1, C.I.U. Plan N. 1045 A (Rhubarb Operations, 1941a), Roc'h Trévél station—Target V/1: 1 access road, 2 - 10, 14 emplacements, 11 West hut emplacement, 12 East hut emplacement, 13 pinnacle of Roc'h Trévél.



Figure 3. Roc'h Trévél station—Target V/1: a secondary access road, b emplacement with protection wall, c emplacement, d peak at about 152 m from the access road entrance. IGNF_PVA_1-0__1952-05-23__C0816-0031_1952_F0216_0816_0044.



(a)

(b)

Figure 4. Roc'h Trévél station—(a) access road; (b) vision toward in the West direction toward Commana.

A ~3.5 x 3.5 m emplacement 4 ($48^{\circ}24'7.24''N$, $3^{\circ}55'10.35''W$, h. 342.98 m) (**Figure 5**) located about 140 m West of the access road entrance; partially covered by vegetation, it appeared in a good preservation state; it consisted of a square construction having the external sides made by parallel rows of concrete blocks and local stones linked by mortar; the door and the window disappeared; the door supports were clearly visible on the facade; the interior was formed by a concrete floor and concrete sides; on the East side were the square window aperture and a rectangular aperture close to the ceiling; the South side hosted the door aperture; the other sides had no openings; rests of rusted supports of possible shelves for equipment protruded from below the window opening and from the interior North side; the ceiling preserved large portions of the formwork wood panels and their wood supports; the visible ceiling concrete portions showed the pebbles of the Ero Vili (Tomezzoli & Marzin, 2015).



Figure 5. Roc'h Trévél station— 3.5×3.5 emplacement 5—(a) vision from the access road entrance; (b) South-East vision; (c) parallel rows made by concrete blocks and local stones at the entrance; (d) interior East side: square window aperture and rectangular aperture; (e) ceiling: portions of the formwork wood panels, wood supports and concrete portions.

A $\sim 7 \times 5$ m emplacement 5 ($48^{\circ}24'7.65''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'10.65''\text{W}$, h. 342.9 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A $\sim 4 \times 2$ m emplacement 6 ($48^{\circ}24'9.7''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'11.72''\text{W}$, h. 342.7 m), close to the station entrance, covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A $\sim 7 \times 5$ m emplacement 7 ($48^{\circ}24'9.8''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'11.99''\text{W}$, h. 342.8 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A $\sim 7 \times 5$ m emplacement 8 ($48^{\circ}24'9.75''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'14.21''\text{W}$, h. 342.82 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A $\sim 7 \times 5$ m emplacement 9 ($48^{\circ}24'10.08''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'17.34''\text{W}$, h. 344.2 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

An emplacement 10 ($48^{\circ}24'11.86''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'11.5''\text{W}$, h. 340.5 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A ~ 7 m in diam. West hut emplacement 11 ($48^{\circ}24'12.76''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'16.2''\text{W}$, h. 335.42 m) (**Figure 6**) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state; the circular or octagonal blast wall was not visible, the aerial disappeared.



Figure 6. Roc'h Trévél station—(a) entrance; (b) interior of the station—on the left: West hut emplacement 11, on the right: East hut emplacement 12.

A ~7 m in diam. East hut emplacement 12 ($48^{\circ}24'13.76''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'8.24''\text{W}$, h. 339.54 m) (**Figure 6**) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state; the circular or octagonal blast wall was not visible, the aerial disappeared.

The pinnacle of Roc'h Trévél 13 ($48^{\circ}24'15.99''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'0.55''\text{W}$, h. 353.92 m) covered by vegetation and inaccessible.

A ~3.5 x 3.5 m emplacement 14 ($48^{\circ}24'15.99''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'0.55''\text{W}$, h. 353.92 m) covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A secondary access road a ($48^{\circ}24'12.07''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}54'58.78''\text{W}$, h. 350.79 m) (**Figure 3**) still existing on the site.

An emplacement b ($48^{\circ}24'11.43''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}54'57.16''\text{W}$, h. 351 m) with a North protection wall covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

An emplacement c ($48^{\circ}24'3.81''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}55'20.83''\text{W}$, h. 342.97 m), not visible on the IGN image of 16th April 1948, covered by vegetation; therefore, it was not possible to determine its preservation state.

A nearby pick d ($48^{\circ}24'9.03''\text{N}$, $3^{\circ}54'57.52''\text{W}$, h. 352.89 m) at about 152 m from the access road entrance which offered an excellent observation and surveillance position for a component of the station; the abundant vegetation has not permitted its exploration.

5. Discussion

Because the Diagram N° 1, C.I.U. Plan N. 1045 A (**Figure 2**) uses for the huts 11 - 12 the same icons used for indicating the Wotan II emplacement of the Roc'h Trédudon *Y8* station near La Feuillée (*Rhubarb Operations, 1941b, Figure 3*), it is possible that also each one of the huts 10 - 11 of the of Roc'h Trévél station hosted a *Wotan II (Y-Zweistrahlbake)*, 42 - 48 MHz aerial (*Lippmann, 2023b*). The missions accomplished by the station are unknown. The two huts (11 - 12) assured redundancy in case of breakout or maintenance of one of the two.

The station construction period is unknown, but, because it is mentioned in the *Rhubarb Operations (1941a)* of 7.7.1941, it was anterior to that date. Therefore,

because the turntable of the beam transmitting device was the same for both *the Wotan I* and *Wotan II* systems (Jones, 2009), it could be possible that the station was initially a *Wotan I* ground station (X system) upgraded successively to a *Wotan II* ground station (Y system) to participate in the *Baedeker Blitz* (Tomezzoli, 2025). In this case, it could be possible that the station, as X system station, could have participated in the Battle of Britain at the end of 1940. Having regard to its western position in the Finistère, it is possible that the station was involved, during the *Baedeker Blitz*, in the bombardments of Exeter, Bath, and Canterbury in the south of Great Britain (Tomezzoli, 2025). Its position on the same ridge at a little more than 1^{3/4} miles to the West South West of the *Y8* station (Target V/2) is probably due to the elevated position and the favorable vision without obstacles toward the North, i.e. toward the South of Great Britain.

Because the station is not mentioned on the *map Flughafengebireich Morlaix-Flugplätze und Ln Anlagen* (Henoff, 2023) of 14.8.43 it is not possible to establish, by means of the map *Unterstellungsverhältnis* (Subordination relationship) its subordination. Perhaps, it was subordinate to the same *Flugs. Regt. West* as the *Y8* station (Tomezzoli, 2025).

Tentatively, the purpose of the station emplacements can be described as follows: 2 - 3 guard post barracks at the access road entrance, 4 guard post near the access road, 5 lodgment barrack for the personnel in service at the guard post 4, 6 - 9 lodgment and service barracks for the personnel of the station, 10 a square *Kabelbrunnen* confirmed by the convergence on it of the buried local or long distance telephonic cables (Figure 2) (Funksammler Publications, 2010), 11-12 huts each supporting a *Wotan II* aerial, 14 an observation position.

The position of the guard post 4 may have been suggested by the necessity of controlling the access road 1 and a road arriving from the South-East (Figure 3). The position of the door on the South side of the post guard seems unusual, exposing the accessing guard personnel to possible attacks coming from said South-East road.

The IGFN aerial reconnaissance image shows that the barracks 2 - 3, 5 - 9 disappeared before the date of 23rd May 1952, a surface, probably corresponding to the floor of the barrack 8, remained visible (Figure 3). The fact that no masonry vestiges were visible at the emplacements 2 - 3, 5 - 9 suggests that the corresponding barracks 2 - 3, 5 - 9 were wood-constructed and dismantled after the WWII.

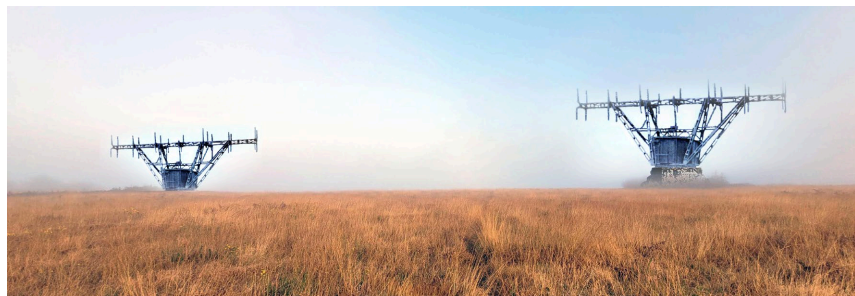


Figure 7. Roc'h Trévél station—hypothetical reconstruction—on the left: West hut emplacement 11, on the right: East hut emplacement 12.

The power supply of the station arrived probably through an electrical line from the electrified Commana.

The above information allows to proceed to a hypothetical reconstruction of the Roc'h Trévél station (**Figure 7**).

6. Conclusion

The visit to the Roc'h Trévél site permitted to determine that practically all its emplacements are actually covered by vegetation, abandoned or disappeared and the memory of the German station forgotten. Therefore, for the moment, the preservation state of its rests is assured.

As usual in this kind of archaeological search, further issues remain to be investigated: the construction phases of the station and its upgrades, the station missions accomplished both as Wotan II ground station or as a Wotan I station, the organization of the food and water supply, the identity of the station commanders in service during WWII.

It is hoped that this article can stimulate further studies on the Roc'h Trévél station and form the basis for a more certain legal status and cultural recovery of the station site for example by means of explicative boards.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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