

THE WAR PATH



SITES ON THE WAR PATH

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1. Start

The path that you are setting out on leads through the area for which the Swedish Volunteer Battalion was responsible in 1941 during the Finnish-Soviet Continuation War. It goes all the way to the former Soviet side. The path is approximately one kilometre long and marked with white arrows and signs. Its various sites are numbered and described in this guide booklet.

Follow the marked route and imagine what the front looked like for the soldiers here during the war. Be careful in the terrain and keep to the marked path.

Good luck on your journey!

2. Communication trench from the support area to the front line

Communication trenches were dug by hand, usually under the cover of darkness. They permitted soldiers to move as safely as possible between their shelters and firing positions. The communication trenches were dug deep enough for protection against shrapnel and rifle fire. The angled line of the trench made it difficult for the enemy to storm it.



The traces you see from the war still today in the terrain were mainly built by the Swedish volunteers on the Hanko front.

3. Tent pit

When a detachment of troops is grouped for defence, accommodation is arranged first in a defensive position, and later, if time and opportunities permit, in tents dug into the ground for better protection. The next stage is to reinforce the shelter with logs to make a dug-out.



4. Latrine

Toilets are needed also needed in the field. The simplest solution is an ordinary pit. During longer stays in the same place, a horizontal crossbar or pole is set up between two trees over the latrine pit as in the model here.



5. The 'Professor's Residence'

The Swedish soldiers expressed their sense of humour in the names given to dug-outs, often referring to the characteristics of their officers.

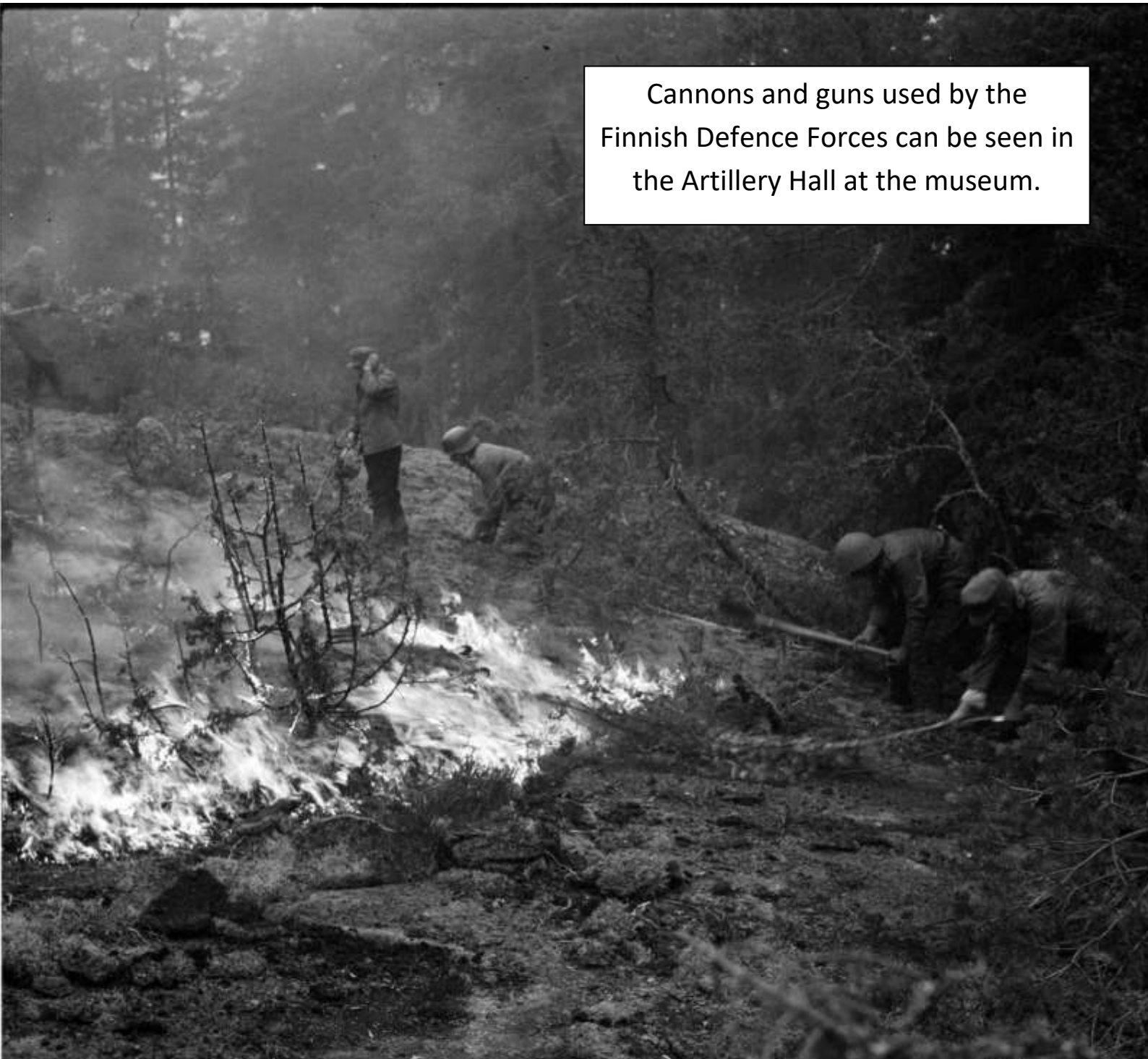
This was the site of the dug-out shelter known as the 'Professor's Residence'. Located nearby were dug-outs called:

- The Pirates' Den
- The Hunter's Lair
- Hangö Casino
- Gout Well
- Casino Royale
- HotelldeBordelle
- Grotta Azzurra



6. Forest fires destroyed a lot of forest areas

In this area, the forest burned down during the war as a consequence of the Soviet artillery shooting. Artillery shelling caused forest fires and considerable damage on both sides of the border.

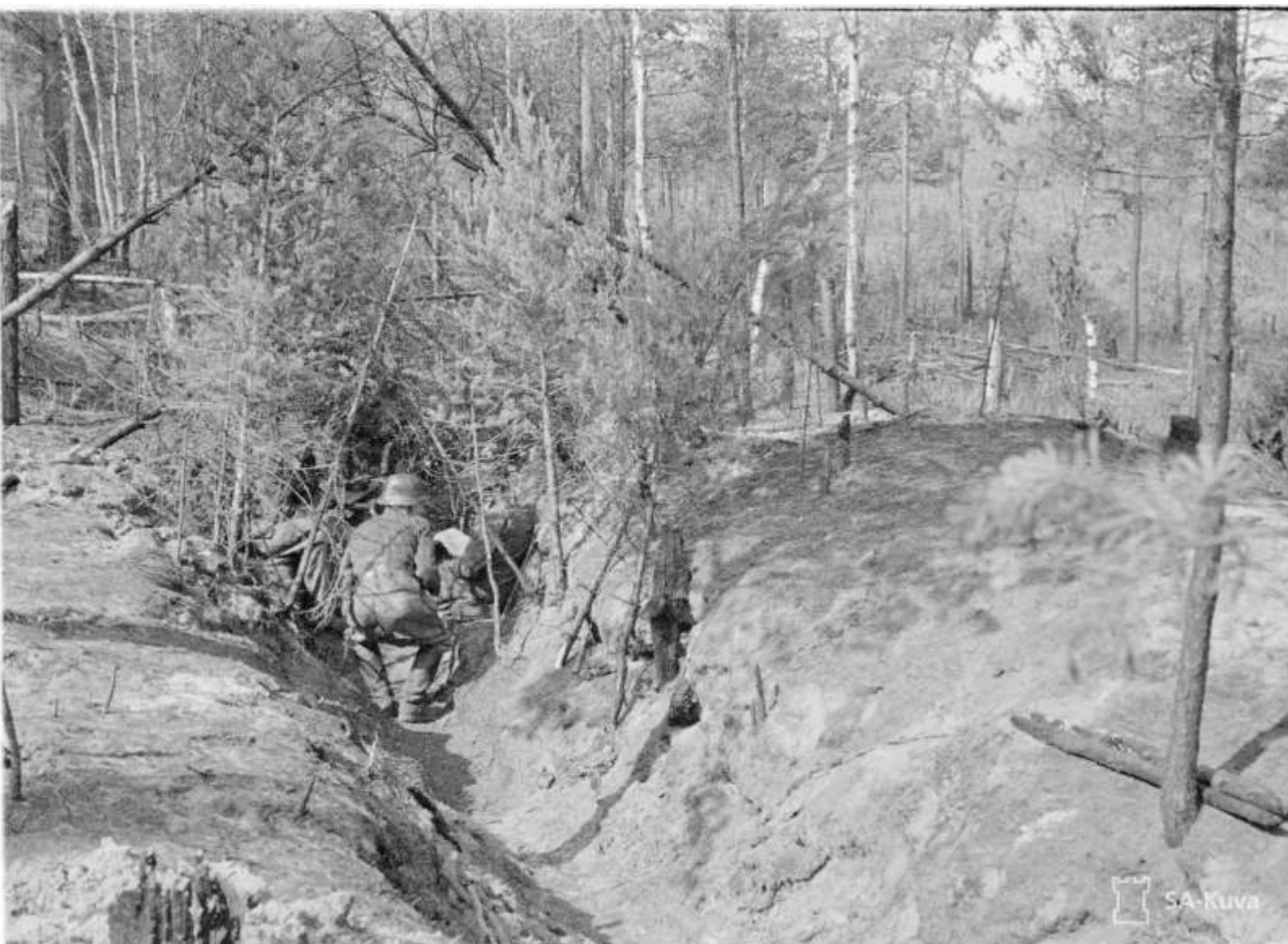


Cannons and guns used by the Finnish Defence Forces can be seen in the Artillery Hall at the museum.

7. Firing and shelter positions

An individual soldier's position is first enlarged into a fox hole and later into a firing position reinforced with logs and protection against shrapnel. A well-functioning firing position has a wide sector of fire and good support for the weapon. It is shielded from view and enemy fire and has a protected route to and from the shelter position or dug-out.

A shelter position allows troops to rest for a while beyond the line of fire. Where possible, it is often converted into a dug-out shelter.



8. The front line


You are now at the front line. Be careful! An enemy sharpshooter in the transformer shed has his sights on you, only 750 metres away.



Would you like to find out more about the Soviet military base in Hanko? Our exhibition presents the activities of the military base and also its civil life.

9. Bog

The adjacent bog was regarded as impossible to cross, but a few patrols on both sides managed to do so.



The nature offered great help when Finland was building its defence, for example at the Harpaskog defence line, which is presented in the exhibition.

10. Forward observer post

Mortar and artillery fire was directed by a forward observer patrol consisting of four men: a forward observer officer, a forward observer NCO, a rangefinder specialist and a signaller. The observer post is connected by radio and/or telephone to the firing positions and its equipment includes periscope binoculars for precise observation and a protractor disc. The post follows a given target sighting plan for directing heavy fire to the right targets.



The most important observer post for the Finnish Defence Forces in the archipelago was situated in the Bengtskär lighthouse.

11. Guard post

To permit soldiers to carry out their tasks undisturbed at their base, there is always a guard on duty. The purpose of the guard post is to monitor the surroundings and to alarm the unit in case of danger. Under threatening conditions, the alarm can be given by firing and in calmer situations silently, for example by pulling on a cord to wake fellow soldiers in a shelter position or dug-out.



12. Firing positions for a pair of soldiers

A pair of soldiers is the smallest fighting unit. Their firing positions were constructed near each other to permit cooperation also in critical situations.



13. Border zone

You are now crossing the border into the leased Soviet area – into former enemy territory. The border was closely watched on both sides and it was mined in places. Despite this, Finnish troops managed to construct dug-outs and fighting positions on the enemy's side. Patrols from both sides also made attacks across the border, which often led to casualties.



On the night of 8th of July 1941 Finnish troops crossed the border. Battles were fought, and one Finnish soldier died and 15 were injured. On the next day Swedish volunteers built positions on the Soviet side of the border. The path continues on the area, which was taken over by the Finnish army.

14. The Cross

Merdemschaev Aleda was a Russian soldier who was killed on 19 September 1941 and was buried here at the edge of the bog.



Soldier Richard Dahlén was at his guard post at dawn. He saw someone come running through the forest. When the person was about 5-6 meters from him, he yelled "Stoj!" (Stop!) and "Ruki vverh!" (Hands up!) but the person continued and opened fire. Dahlén took shelter and avoided being hit. He opened fire and the soldier fell, only two meters from him.

15. The 'Gyllene Freden' dug-out

This was the site of probably the best-known dug-out in this area, named after the renowned restaurant *Den Gyltene Freden* (The Golden Peace) in Stockholm dating from the 18th century. It was built by the machine gun squad *Ericson-Gyllå* of the Heavy Artillery Company of the Swedish Volunteer Battalion.



The memorial dug-out by the museum is a replica of the original *Gyllene Freden* shelter.

16. Listening post

At night time, the surveillance of the border was conducted from a listening post in a forward position where careful listening could reveal if the enemy was crossing the border. To identify the person, whether he was friend or enemy, passwords were used. The wrong password resulted in an alarm. The main way to give the alarm was to open fire.



17. Elephant Gun

The Finnish-made 20 mm calibre anti-tank rifle was known as the *Elephant Gun*.



A similar, Swiss made gun (Solothurn) can be seen in the Artillery Hall at the museum. That gun was found in the ground in Lappvik in the 1980's.

18. Slingshot

Hand grenades could not always be thrown far enough by hand for the desired effect. Ingenious Swedish soldiers made use of a weapon that they had learnt to use already as boys, launching hand grenades to the enemy's side with slingshots.



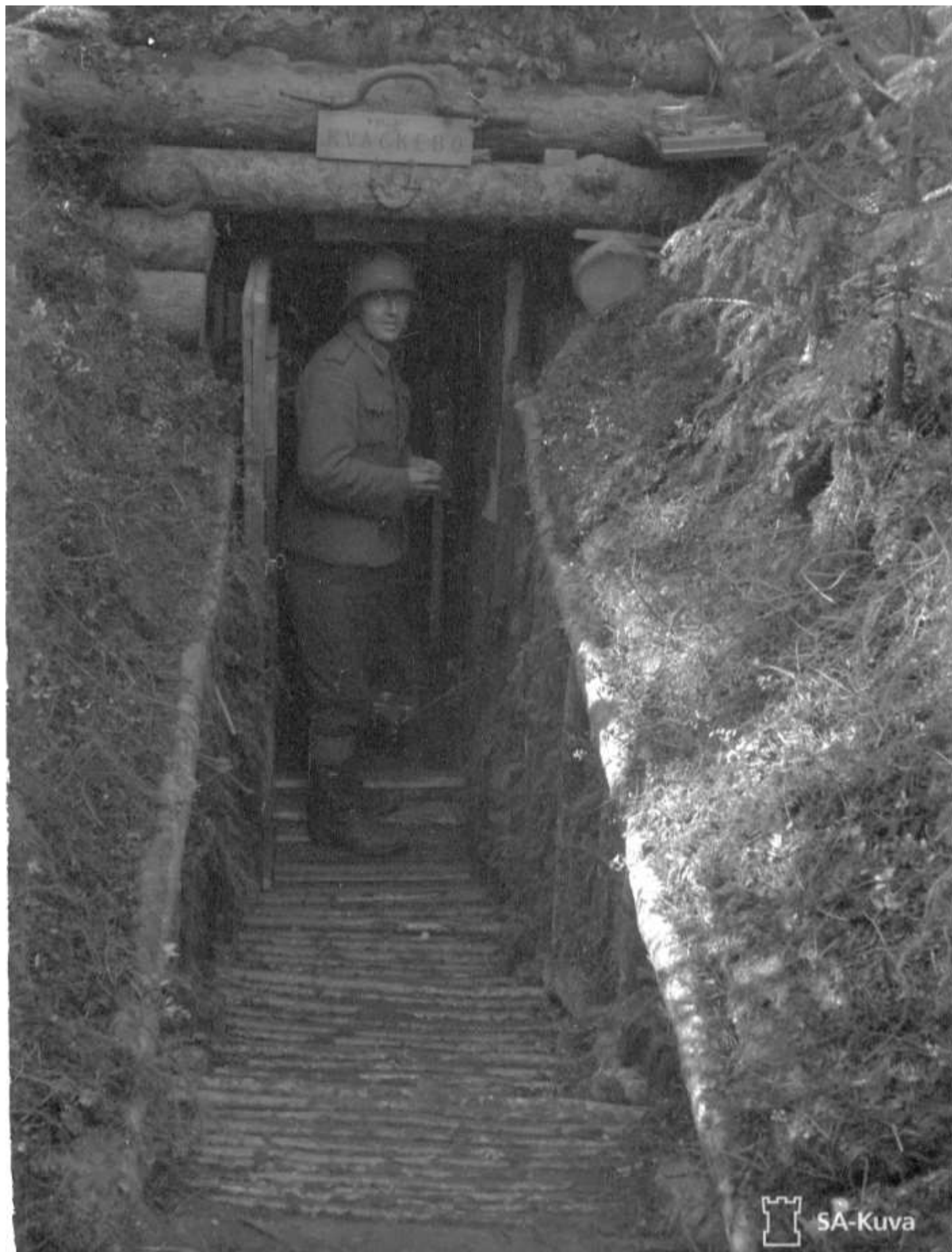
19. Tunnel

There were several tunnels under the old road, continuing as trenches towards the Soviet observation tower. The tunnels provided convenient unobserved access to the other side of the road.



20. Kvackebo

The site of the dug-out known as 'Kvackebo'.



21. Border marker no. 19.

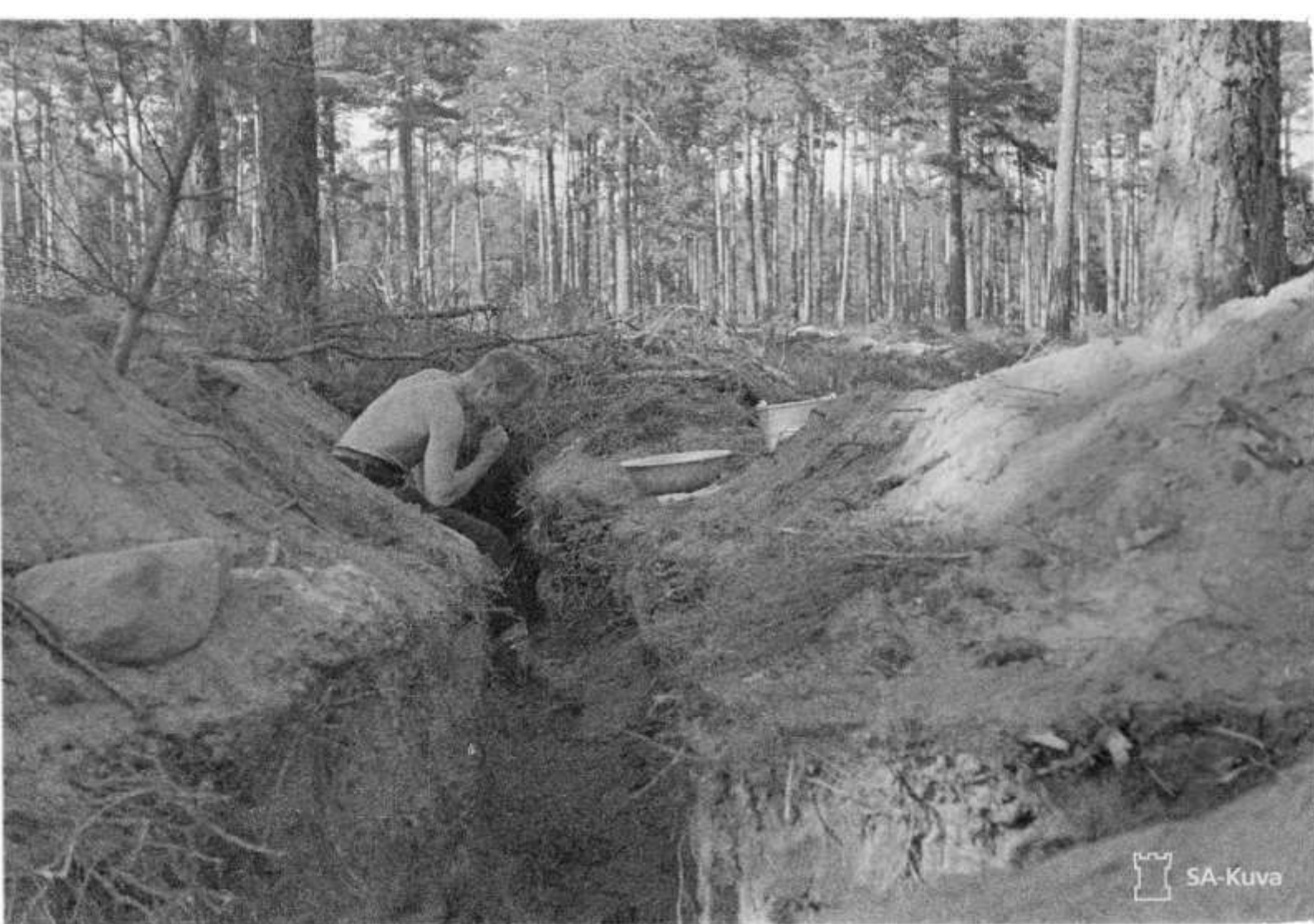
The border of 1940 –1941 was in this location. Border marker no. 19 between the Soviet lease area and Finnish territory is in its precise original location. The cleared border area was 10 metres wide with markers of granite and wood.

The original border pole no. 16 is kept at the Hanko Front Museum.



22. Hygiene in the field

Hygiene was also important in field conditions. When the situation was calm, there was time to attend to personal hygiene, but this was as close to peacetime conditions that the men could get.



How were the injured soldiers taken care of in field conditions? In the exhibition at the museum you can see several different instruments that were used in field hospitals.

23. Propaganda

Propaganda was important during the war. Its purpose was to try to convince the opposing side that they were fighting for the wrong cause. Propaganda was spread in many ways, with the use of leaflets and loudspeakers, among other means. One of the less common methods was to use bows and arrows, with leaflets wound around the shaft of an arrow shot over to the enemy's side.



At this location, the enemy lines were only 200 metres away on the other side of the railway line. Caution was necessary because of the enemy's alert and accurate snipers.

Note border marker no. 20 close to the road.



Propaganda leaflets in Russian and Ukrainian and a propaganda grenade is displayed in the exhibition at the museum.

24. The Hillock of Death

This location is known as 'The Hillock of Death', because 17 soldiers were killed here.



More information about the battles
and losses of the Hanko Front are
found in the exhibition at the museum.

25. The memorial dug-out 'Gyllene Freden'

On the left you can see the replica of the *Gyllene Freden* dug-out. It was built by local war veterans in 1981.



Congratulations!

You made it through the War Path in one piece.
You are welcome for a well-deserved break at the canteen,
where you can enjoy a cup of coffee or tea.

Please return this booklet to the canteen or the mailbox
next to the door. Thank you!

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The War Path was initiated by PE Nyman around 1990,
a few years after the Hanko Front Museum had opened.

In 2017 a team has improved the information leaflet
and the sites along the path.

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