

German units at Antwerp in 1914, Part 2

Introduction

The efforts of the German artillery units against the Belgian forts at Liège and Namur as well as the French forts at Maubeuge in August and September 1914 made a great impression on the contemporaries. Especially the modern, super-heavy pamphlets proved to be far superior to older forts.

This article discusses some of the participating artillery units and shows examples of most of the pamphlets used.

Table 1: Siege Artillery Item 10 and

13 cm cannon 15 cm field howitzers	40 72
21 cm howitzers 1	48
30.5 cm howitzers	5
30 cm howitzers (Austrian)	4
42 cm howitzers	4
Total	173

The siege artillery

Armee-Abteilung Beseler was assigned to siege artillery during the attack on Antwerp, which at the end of the operations included 160 heavy pamphlets and 13 of the heaviest type, including 4 Austrian.

The information on the artillery units and the number of pamphlets is based on Source 1. If the number of pamphlets in the below-mentioned units is added together, however, only 49 of the pamphlets can be accounted for.

Staff

General der Fußartillerie: *Generalleutnant Borckenhagen* [2](#)

Chief of Staff: *Colonel Hühn*

Fußartillerie-Brigade (*Generalmajor Schabel*)

Deployed in support of 5. Reserve Betykning Infanterie-Division

Regimental Commander

I. Bataillon/Fußartillerie-

Regiment 9 II. Battalion/Fußartillerie- 2 pcs. 21 cm howitzer

Regiment 9 I. Battalion/Reserve-Fußartillerie 2 pcs. 21 cm howitzer

Lieutenant Colonel Schulenburg

Regiment 7 ½ I. Battalion/Reserve-

Fußartillerie

Regiment 3 ½ II. Battalion/Reserve-

Fußartillerie

Regiment 3 ½ Battalion/Landwehr-

Colonel Bormkam

Fußartillerie

Regiment 7 2 pcs. 15 cm
field howitzer

Schwere Küsten-Mörser-Batterie 1 2 pcs. 30.5 cm howitzer

(Battery Neumann)

Festungs-Artillerie Bataillon 8 (Austrian) 4 pcs. 30 cm howitzer Kurze Marine-
Kanonen-Batterie 2 (*Batterie Becker*) 2 pcs. 42 cm howitzer 3) — Probably directly under the
brigade commander's command

Kurze Marine-Kanonen-Batterie 3 (*Batterie Erdmann*) 2 pcs. 42 cm howitzer 4) —

Fußartillerie-Regiment

Deployed in support of 6. Reserve

Infantry-Division ½ I.

Battalion/Reserve-Fußartillerie Regiment 3 2 pcs. 10 cm cannon

II. Battalion/

Reserve Foot Artillery Regiment 7 ½ II. 2 pcs. 13 cm cannon

Battalion/

Reserve-Fußartillerie Regiment 8 I. Battalion/ 2 pcs. 15 cm
field howitzer

Reserve-

Fußartillerie Regiment 2 **Fußartillerie- 4 pcs. 15 cm
Brigade** field howitzer

(Generalmajor Ziethen)

Deployed to support the Marine Division Equipment 4 pcs. 15

Landwehr Fußartillerie-Bataillon 2

cm field
howitzer

Regimental Commander

½ I. Battalion/Reserve-Fußartillerie 2 pcs. 10 cm cannon

Colonel Breusing

Regiment 18 I.

Battalion/Reserve-Fußartillerie Regiment 4 pcs. 21 cm howitzer

9 III. Battalion/

Reserve-Fußartillerie Regiment 7 Schwere 2 pcs. 13 cm cannon

Colonel Schradin

Küsten-Mörser-

Batterie 5 (*Batterie Scharf*) 2 pcs. 30.5 cm howitzers Probably directly under the brigade
commander's command

Schwere Küsten-Mörser-Batterie 6 (*Battery Book*) 1 piece. 30.5 cm howitzer

Foot artillery



Schleswig-Holsteinisches
Fußartillerie-Regiment Nr.9.

The peacetime organization of the heavy German artillery (*Fußartillerie*) included 24 regiments [6](#)) and [1](#) independent division, of which 19 came from Prussia, 3 from Bavaria and 2 from Saxony.

Detachments (designated battalions) equipped with 15 cm heavy field howitzers consisted of 4 batteries, while detachments equipped with 21 cm howitzers consisted of 2 batteries. Each battery had 4 leaflets.

During the mobilization, 23 reserve artillery regiments [7](#)) were [formed](#), including siege artillery units. These reserve regiments consisted of 2 divisions of 4 batteries; the detachments numbered 24 guns or 16 howitzers.

If the above information, derived from Sources 2, 3 and 8, is compared with the information on the current artillery units at Antwerp, the unit designations do not make sense in all cases. When it is thus mentioned that I. Battalion, Fußartillerie-Regiment 9 participated with 2 units. 21 cm howitzers, information on the number of the battery in question must be missing.

The Belgian article L'artillerie lourde Allemande by Günter Schalich (Source 5) describing the heavy German artillery uses Fußartillerie-Regiment 9 as an example.

Table 2: Heavy artillery pieces at Antwerp

Pamphlet	Designation	Year	Weight	Range	1905	Grenade
10 cm cannon	10 cm Cannon 04	2.8 t	10.2 km	1909 ?	16.5	15 kg
13 cm cannon	13 cm Cannon	km	1903	2.7 h	7.5 km	40 kg
15 cm field howitzer	Schwere Feldhaubitze 02	1910	15.5 h	9.7 km	1911	40 kg
21 cm howitzer	21 cm Mortar 10	20.9 h	11 km			120 kg
30 cm howitzer	30 cm Mörser M.11					380 kg
(Austrian)						
30.5 cm howitzer	Schwere Küsten-Mörser	1896	30 h	11 km		330 kg
42 cm howitzer	Kurze-Marine-Kanone 14, M Device	1911	42.6 t	9.3 km	810, 930 and 1,160 kg	



German foot artillery, privates, ca. 1914.

From Source [8.5](#))

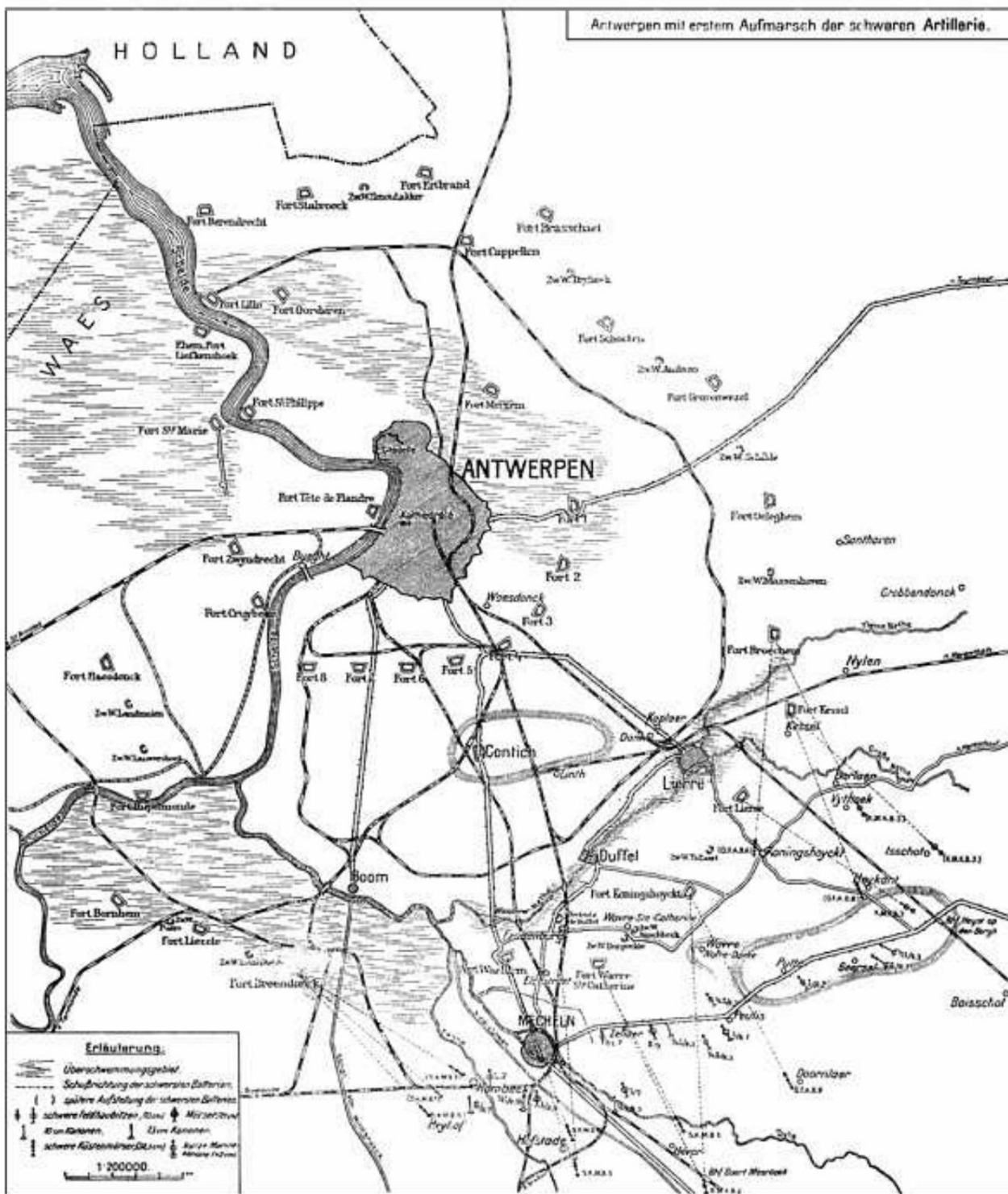
Some of the pamphlets are described in more detail in Source 5; see also *Artillery of the Great War, German Guns (Landships)*

In terms of uniform, the German foot artillery was equipped like the rest of the army, with the typical artillery hat with a spherical top. The sleeve cuffs were of the so-called *Brandenburg* model. The regiment's number was worn on the shoulder pads and - at the beginning of the war - on the helmet cover of the pikkel.

Some of the following mentions of the individual pamphlet types are taken from Lieutenant O. Andersen's article *Copenhagen's Land Fortification 1886-1920, Part 2* in *Krigshistorisk Tidsskrift* (Source 8).

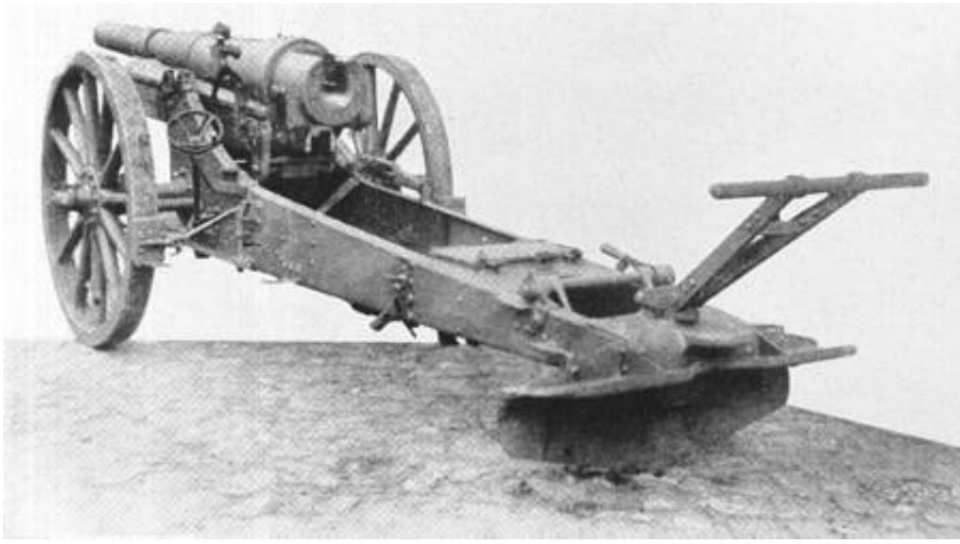
In the article, e.g. possible opportunities for the Germans to break through Copenhagen's land fortifications, based on the siege of Liège in August 1914.

Artillery advance



Map sketch 2: The advance of the siege artillery.
From Source 1.

10 cm and 13 cm cannon



10 cm cannon Model 1904.

From Source 5.

The 13 cm siege gun had a range of over 14 km and was distinguished by high muzzle velocity and the resulting very flat trajectory. The projectile weight was approx. 40 kg.

The pamphlet proved to be very suitable for shelling distant, uncovered targets. Its shell casing had great effect in depth and was therefore much feared by the Belgian and French field artillery, which was effectively fired at distances far beyond its own range. The British troops called the 13 cm gun *whizz-bang*, as the well-known whistle before the detonation of the shell almost coincided with the explosion of the projectile.



A pamphlet from a Garde-Fußartillerie-Regiment, photographed at Renaix, Belgium, 1914.

From the book *Fighting in Flanders* by the American journalist E. Alexander Powell (*Great War in a Different Light*).

The pamphlet is probably a 10 cm cannon Model 1904.

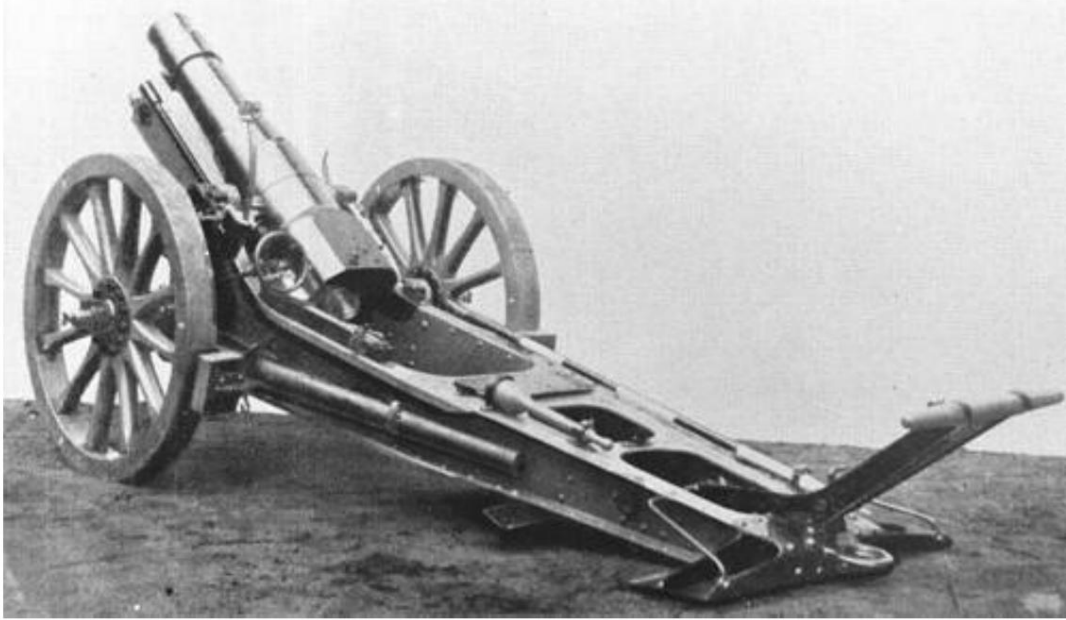
A 10 cm gun battery had the following personnel and equipment (Sources 2 and 4):

I do not have information describing the 13 cm gun batteries. In 1914, the 13 cm cannon was basically an experimental piece that was the forerunner of a later cannon with a caliber of 15 cm.

10 cm cannon battery

- 7 officers, 241 non-commissioned officers and privates as well as 9 constables/sanitation soldiers - 4 guns (with displays) - 8 ammunition wagons, 1 observation wagon, 1 supply wagon and 1 blacksmith wagon as well as 1 baggage wagon, 1 kitchen wagon, 1 fodder wagon - 20 riding horses and 102 draft horses

15 cm field howitzer



15 cm field howitzer Model 1902.
From Source 5.

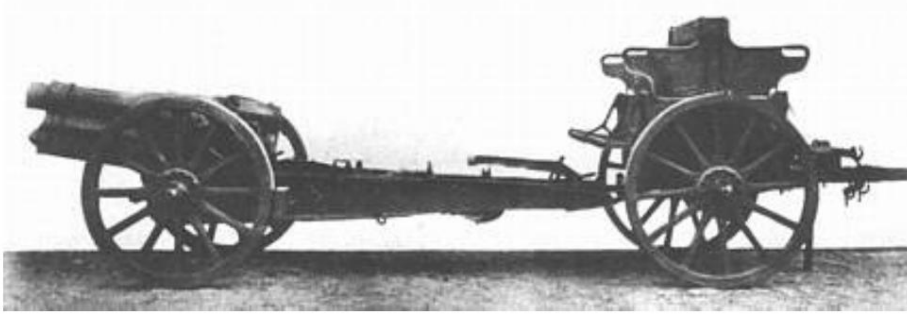
The pamphlet, which was introduced from 1904, weighed approx. 2.7 t.
The firing range was a good 7.5 km.



15 cm field howitzer Model 1902, approx. 1914.
From a contemporary German postcard found on the Internet.

A heavy field howitzer battery had the following personnel and equipment (Sources 2 and 4):

15 cm field howitzer battery



From German 15cm schweres Feldhaubitze w/02 (Landships).

- 6 officers, 24 non-commissioned officers and 191 privates as well as 9 constables/sanitation soldiers - 4 heavy field howitzers (with displays) - 8 ammunition wagons, 1 observation wagon, 1 supply wagon and 1 blacksmith wagon as well as 1 baggage wagon, 1 kitchen wagon and 1 fodder wagon - 20 riding horses and 102 draft horses

21 cm howitzer



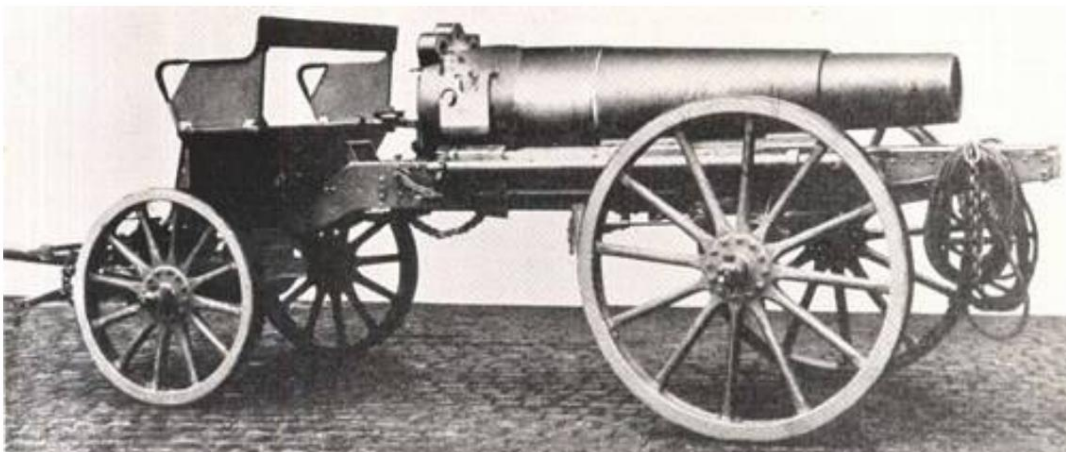
21 cm howitzer.

From Source 5.

The pamphlet weighed approx. 4 tons.

The projectile weight was 120 kg, the range 9,770 m.

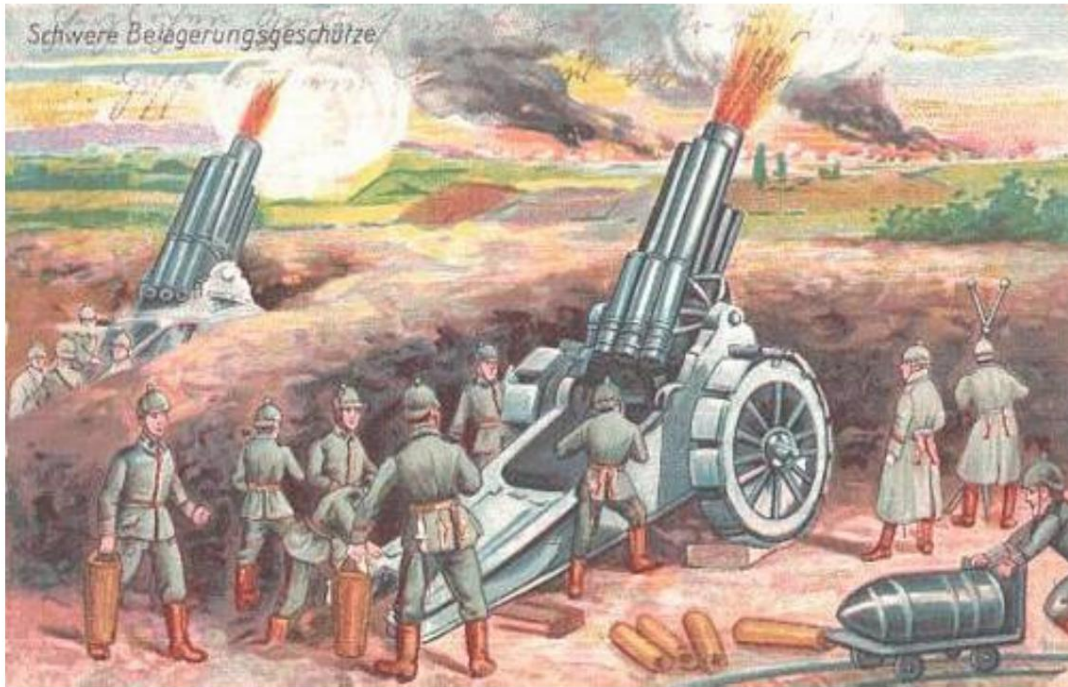
The troops were very happy with the pamphlet, as it shot *haargenau*.



Tube carriage for 21 cm howitzers.

From Source 5.

It was specially designed for shelling permanent installations - it could shake (but not penetrate) armored domes, destroy vanishing towers and other lighter structures, and destroy passive storm barriers.



Schwere Belagerungsgeschütze, approx. 1914.

The drawing may depict pamphlets of caliber 28 cm, which in structure resemble 21 cm howitzers.

In relation to personnel and equipment, Source 2 provides the following information:

21 cm howitzer battery

- 6 officers and 249 non-commissioned officers and privates -

4 heavy howitzers (each with carriage for pipes, made, wheel belts and ammunition, all drawn by 6 horses) - 6 carriages of different types - perhaps 1 observation carriage, 1 supply carriage and 1 blacksmith carriage and 1 baggage carriage, 1 kitchen wagon, 1 feed wagon - 148 horses.

For additional images, see German 21 cm Mörser w/10-16 (Landships), which contains extensive image material, including images of e.g. a pamphlet exhibited at the Army Museum in Brussels.

30.5 cm howitzer



Schweres Geschütz in Tätigkeit.

30.5 cm howitzers were found in various more or less mobile mounts. It had a firing range of approx. 11,000 m with a projectile weight of 330 kg.

The projectiles were able to penetrate even heavy armor. The effect in the interior of the shelled works was extremely violent.

The pamphlet is probably a 30.5 cm howitzer.

Source 2 provides the following organizational information:

30.5 cm howitzer battery

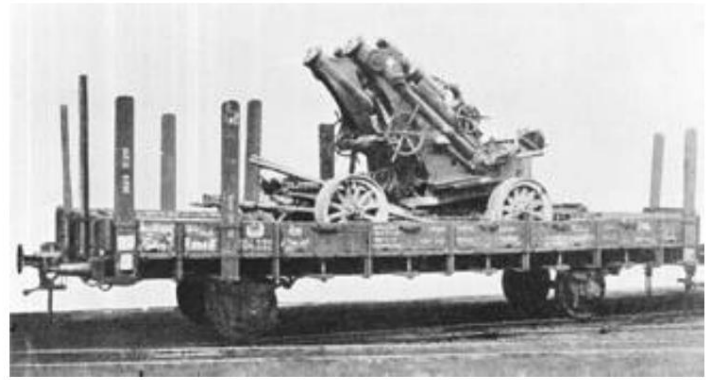
- 6 officers and 129 non-commissioned officers and privates
- 3 motor vehicles - 16 horses

Locomotive park

- 2 officers and 70 non-commissioned officers and privates - 25 locomotives - 3 heavy and 12 light freight motor vehicles - 3 passenger motor vehicles

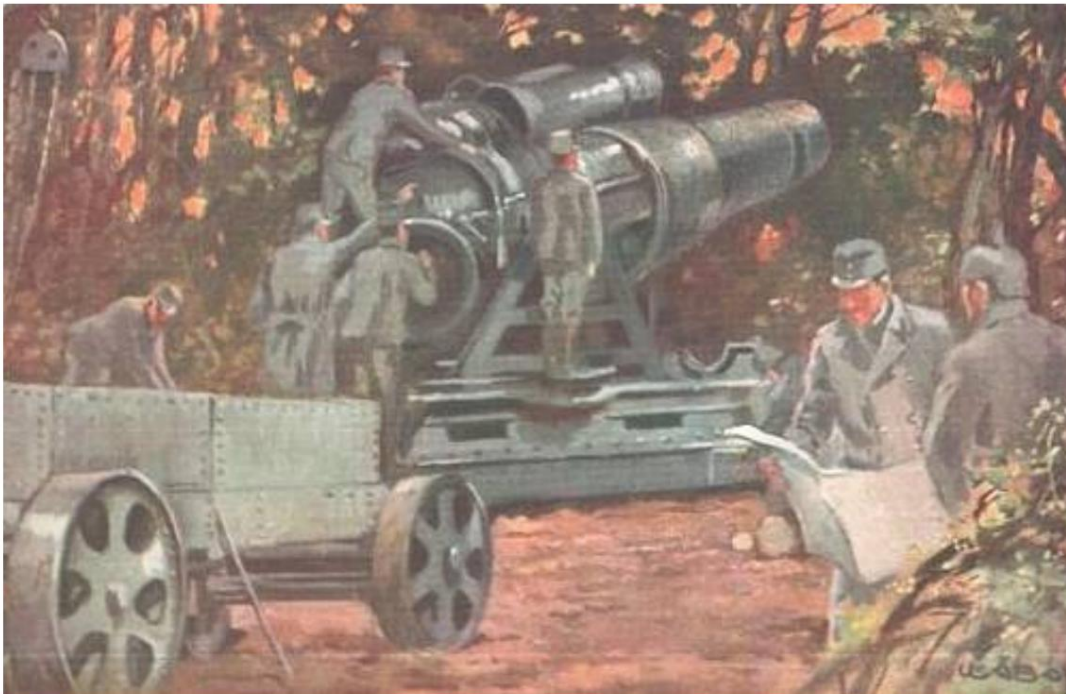
At the outbreak of war, the German army had a total of 9 pamphlets of this type, organized into 5 batteries. Two batteries were motorized, while the others were transported by rail.

The motor transport took place with the help of various types of steam-powered tractors (locomobiles).



*Motorized version of 30.5 cm howitzer, under rail transport.
From Source 5.*

30.5 cm howitzer (Austrian)



Austrian 30 cm Skoda howitzer Model 1911.

Festungs-Artillerie Bataillon 8 was based in Haidenschaft, now Ajdovscina in Slovakia.

The personnel were (July 1914) primarily of Slovene and German descent (41% of each group), with the remainder being unspecified [8](#). [__](#)

The head of department was per May 1914, Lieutenant Colonel Albert Langer [9](#).

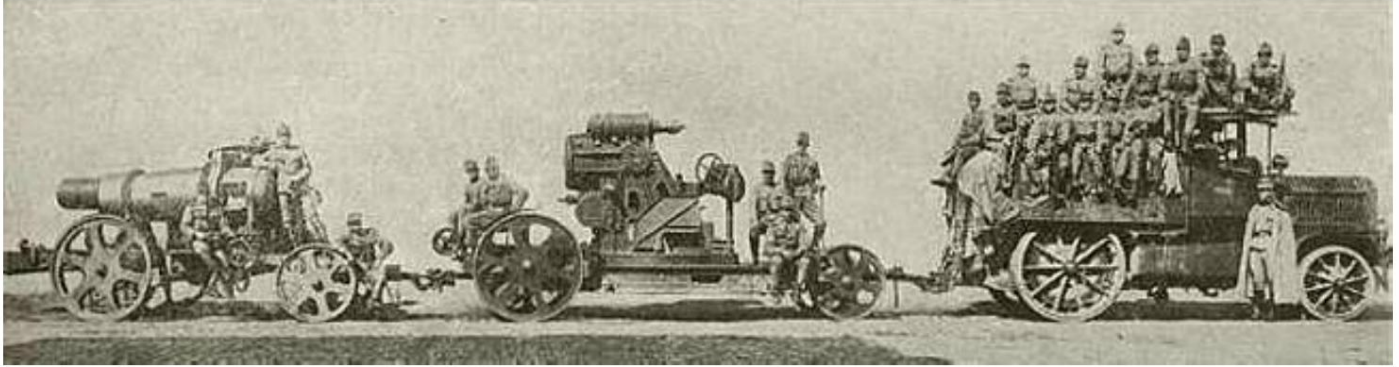
How did it happen that this particular division at Antwerp was under the command of lieutenant colonel (?) Amann, was selected to participate in the war in Western Europe, I am not aware. If anyone knows the details, I would like to hear about it.

An Austrian fortress artillery division consisted of 2 batteries, each with 2 pamphlets.

This Austrian contribution was widely photographed at the time, and there exist quite a few pictures taken in connection with the department's arrival in Brussels.

Heavy Austrian howitzer battery (30 cm) [10](#)

- 8 officers and 200 non-commissioned officers and
privates - 2 heavy
howitzers - 6 cannon tractors M. 12 (see
picture) - 4 wagons (called *Fuhrwerk*
[11](#)) - 20 light and heavy trucks, with trailers



Austrian 30 cm Skoda howitzer Model 1911.
From *The Great War in a Different Light*.

For further data and images of the pamphlet and gun tractor, see 30 cm Mörser M.11/16 and Artilleriezugwagen M.12 (*Die Österreichisch-Ungarische Armee 1914-1918*). Further reference is made to Austro-Hungarian 30.5cm Mörser M.11 (*Landships*), which contains extensive pictorial material, including images of two still-existing pamphlets, exhibited in Italy and Serbia. See also Skoda 30.5 cm Mörser M.11 & M.16 (*Frontline 18*).

42 cm howitzer

The 42 cm howitzer or *Kurze-Marine-Kanone 14*, nicknamed *Dicke Bertha*, was the Germans' most effective weapon in the fortress war. Two types – *Gerät Gamma* (rail transport) and *Gerät M* (motorized) – are relevant here, as *Kurze Marine-Kanonen-Batterie 2 (Batterie Becker)* was rail-transported, while *Kurze Marine-Kanonen-Batterie 3 (Batterie Erdmann)* was motorized.



42 cm howitzer (type M).
From Source 5.

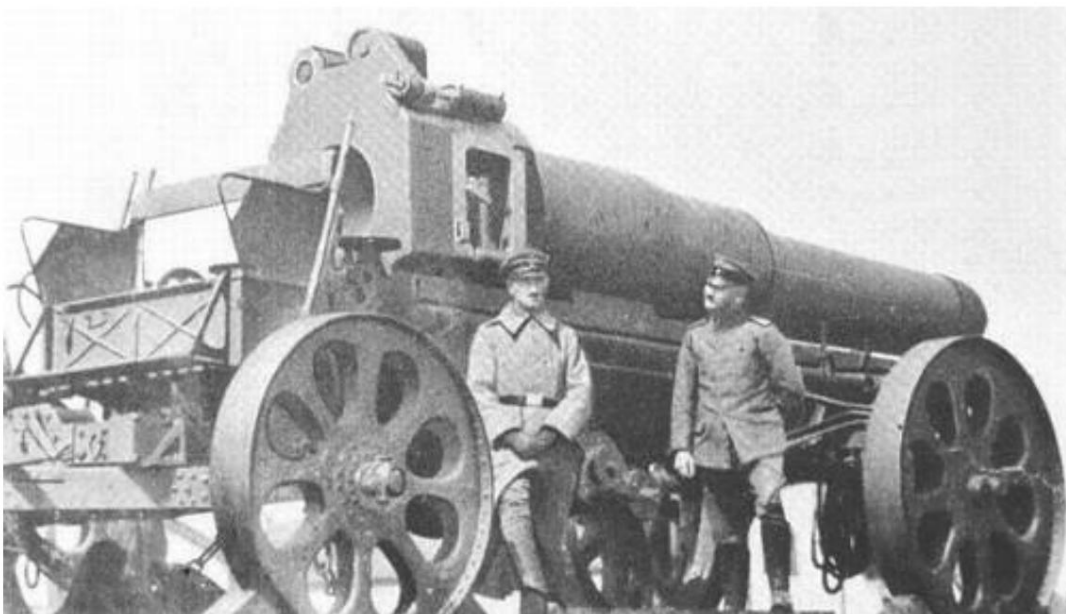
At the beginning of the war, the German army had three batteries - two that were transported per railway and a motorized one.

During the war, a further number of pamphlets were delivered, so that the total number came to 5 pamphlets of type M and 10 of type Gamma.

The howitzer shells were man-tall and weighed 810, 930 and 1,160 kg respectively, with corresponding explosive charges of 25, 106 and 265 kg. An ammunition truck could carry 3-4 of these shells.

Kurze Marine-Cannon-Battery 3

Source 8 gives information about the battery's action at Antwerp, where it was under the command of Captain Erdmann. The battery was equipped with 2 pcs. 42 cm howitzers and took part in August 1914 in the siege of Liège.

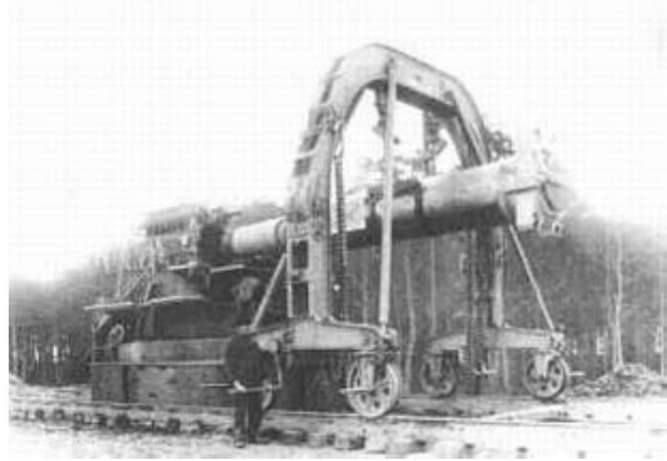


Tube carriage for 42 cm howitzers (type M).
From Source 5.

It arrived in the current area of operations on 28 September 1914 [12](#)), and from Aarschot the battery moved into position on a ridge west of Heist-op-den-Berg on 29 September 1914.

See Map sketch 2, lower right quarter.

The battery is brought into position within 4 hours. A Belgian reconnaissance plane observes the battery and it is taken under fire by Belgian field artillery; however, there are no matches closer than 80 m from the positions and this does not delay the line-up, which is completed by noon.



42 cm howitzers are brought into position - Gerät M [13](#) (left) and Gerät Gamma [14](#) (right). —

Source 3 states that the battery was manned like the 30.5 cm howitzer batteries, only with an additional 105 non-commissioned officers and privates, i.e. a total of 6 officers as well as 234 non-commissioned officers and privates. Elsewhere, however, it is mentioned that the battery numbered 283 men.



Motorized 42 cm howitzer battery (type M).

From Source 5.

The composition may have been like the locomotive park at the 30.5 cm howitzer batteries.

In Source 2 it is stated that the vehicles were made available by the Krupp factories at the outbreak of war.

Source 3 mentions that the crew (in the batteries?) were originally employees of Krupp.

Fort Lierre is defeated

In the period 30 September to 2 October 1914, the battery fires 175 shots against Fort Lierre. Source 1 states the firing distance as 7.8 km. The fort's main armament - 2 armored turrets with 15 cm guns - are destroyed or rendered useless, while 2 of the close defense's 4 armored turrets with 75 mm guns are destroyed. The secondary armament - 3 armored turrets with 12 cm guns - remains intact, but is useless as the corridors leading to the turrets are filled with concrete rubble and soil.

The fort's barracks and magazines are breached in three places, including the three-metre-thick concrete cover on the barracks. Source 6 mentions [15](#)) the following example of the penetration ability of the 42 cm shell: A shell hitting an old French fort without detonating penetrates 2 m of soil, 3 m of reinforced concrete and then breaks through a 70 cm wall.



One of the armored towers of Fort Lierre, after the conquest.
From Source 8.

The Belgian garrison escapes the fort late in the afternoon on 2 October 1914, and German units occupy the fort on 3 October 1914, early in the morning. First unit on the spot is 1st Company of 35. Reserve Infantry Regiment (6th Reserve Infantry Division), under the command of Lieutenant Baar.

The bulk of the soldiers appear to be from the German Marine Division.

The fort's infantry force consisted of reservists from the cavalry's personnel depot in Beveren. The fort's commander, Lieutenant Colonel Doneux, described the force in 1919 as unusable and quite undisciplined.

Originally it was equipped with Mauser rifles, which were later replaced with Lebel rifles; however, the soldiers were unable to operate either type...

Observational conditions



Fesselballon, unsere Artilleriewirkung beobachtend.

The massive deployment of artillery necessitated good artillery observation.

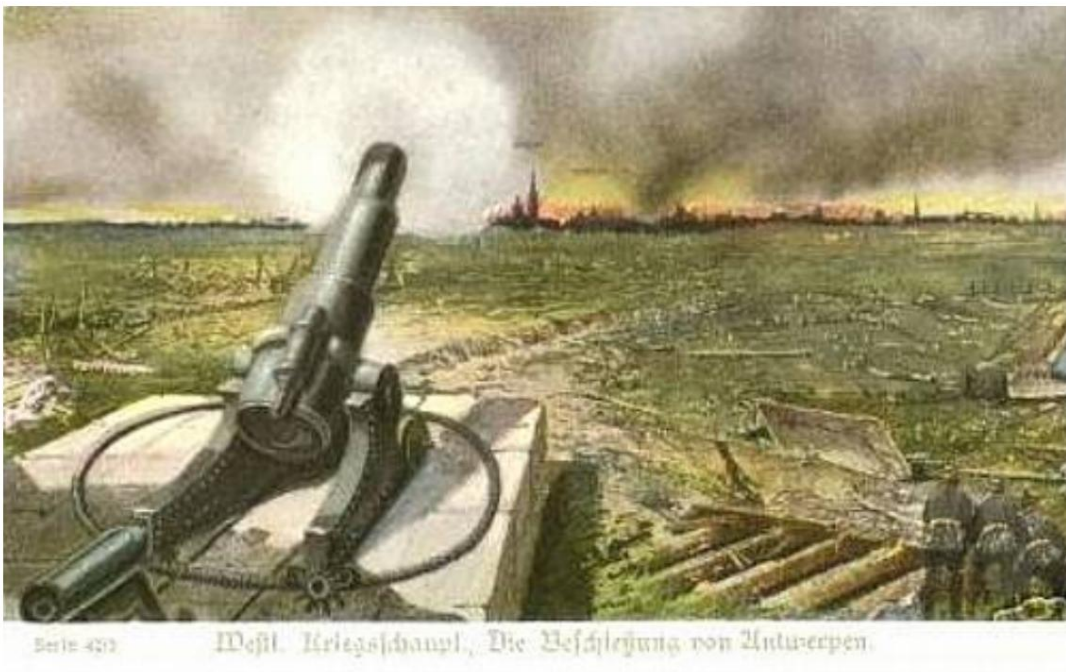
The landscape around Antwerp is described as sheltering quite flat and with few natural observation opportunities.

The need for artillery observation could to some extent be met via observation wagons, with telescopic masts, and observation balloons, but the church towers of the surrounding towns provided the best observation opportunities. This was of course foreseen by the Belgian artillery, which shelled the churches, with consequent destruction of both churches and towns.

In addition to Feldluftschiffer-Abteilung 1 (see Part 1), Festungs-Luftschiffer-Abteilung 10 and 22 also took part.

Sources

1. *Antwerp 1914* by Erich von Tschischwitz, Schlachten des Weltkriegs, Band 3, published by the German Reichsarchiv, Verlag Gerhard Stalling, Berlin 1925.
2. *Imperial German Army 1914-18 - Organisation, Structure, Orders-of-Battle* by Hermann Cron, Helion & Company Ltd., Solihull / West Midlands 2002, ISBN 1-874622-70-1. The book is an English translation of one of the standard sources on German organization, published in 1937 as volume V of the series *Geschichte des Deutschen Heeres im Weltkrieg, 1914-1918*. The translation of unit designations is not consistent in places.
3. *Imperial German Handbook 1914-1918* by DB Nash, Ian Allan Ltd., Shepperton / Surrey 1980, ISBN 0-7110-0968-6.
4. *Deutsches Heer 1914 - 1918 Formationsgeschichte* (Interessen- und Arbeitsgemeinschaft Weltkrieg 1914-1918) - especially Rekrutierung, Divisionen, Brigaden and Generalkommandos.
5. *L'artillerie lourde Allemande* by Günter Schalich (a Belgian collection of historical articles).
6. *Copenhagen's Land Fortification 1886-1920, Part 2* by Lt. O. Andersen, Krighistorisk Tidsskrift, August 1975. The article assesses, among other things, the Germans' possible opportunities to break through Copenhagen's land fortifications, based on the siege of Liège in August 1914..
7. *The siege of Antwerp in 1914* (Forum Eerste Wereldoorlog).
8. *German Artillery 1914-1918* by David Nash, Almark Publications, London 1970, ISBN 85524-003-2.



Westlichen Kriegsschauplatz - Die Beschießung von Antwerpen.

From a contemporary German postcard, seen for sale on the Internet.

The card is a colored version of the same motif shown in Part 1. Unfortunately, I did not know my visit time when the card was for sale, so until a better version appears, this somewhat poor reproduction will have to be content.

In the lower right corner, three artillerymen can be seen, who are apparently depicted in the dark blue peacetime uniform. The dark blue uniforms may well be correct, as many of the siege artillery units were reserve units, but of course there may also be some artistic freedom involved.

Per Finsted

Notes:

- 1) According to German terminology of the time, a howitzer of caliber 21 cm and larger was designated as a *Mörser*.
- 2) General der Artillerie Friedrich Wilhelm Karl Erich Borckenhagen (1857-1921) ([web.genealogie](#))
- 3) The battery was transported by rail.
- 4) The battery was motorized.
- 5) From Schleswig-Holsteinisches Fuß-artillerie-Regiment Nr.9 (Formationsgeschichte, Deutschlands, Gen-Wiki). The publisher is a German cigarette card.
- 6) See e.g. Numerisches Verzeichnis der Regimenter (Formationsgeschichte, Deutschlands, GenWiki).
- 7) See e.g. Provisorische Gliederung - Verzeichnis der im Kriege vorhandenen Einheiten (Formationsgeschichte, Deutschland's GenWiki).
- 8) Fortress Artillery 1914 and Common Army Fortress Artillery Ethnicity (Austro-Hungarian Land Forces 1848-1918).
- 9) Festungsartilleriebataillone (Die Österreichisch-Ungarische Armee 1914 - 1918).

10) The auto battery (Die Österreichisch-Ungarische Armee 1914 - 1918).

11) Gyldendal's German-Danish dictionary (1999) translates *Fuhrwerk* as (horse) vehicle, but specifically mentions that the Austrian meaning is lorry.

12) Source 8 further states that two infantry companies were assigned as artillery cover - 12. Company from the 3rd Infantry Regiment and 4th Company from the 85th Infantry Regiment. However, these units cannot be identified from the overview of units at Antwerp.

13) From M-Gerät 42cm L/12 Howitzer by Peter Kempf and Roger Todd (Landships). Here you will find, among other things, a series of photographs showing how the pamphlet is brought into position.

14) From 42-cm Mörser by Erich Kassing (Die Schlacht um Verdun - Eine europäische Tragödie)

15) With source in *Verdun 1916* by Alistair Horne, Copenhagen 1966.