



**68th  
Anniversary  
of the  
Battle of  
the Bulge**

By Alain Henry de Frahan #20768, BMVT, Gembloux, Belgium



The François-Xavier Jordens' OT-810 and the Polish 'Panther' advance towards Recogne. (A.HdF)

*The commemoration of the 68th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge (16 December 1944 - 30 January 1945) was once again the scene of a little bit of a mess. The static and dynamic reenactments in the villages of Recogne and Cobru were cleverly revised at the last minute. Likewise the WWII vehicle parade in Bastogne was also structured at nearly the last minute by the BMVT (Belgian Military Vehicle Trust), following the withdrawal of the ABC club. Other clubs conducted their own operations around Bastogne.*



The city of Bastogne - led by a new mayor, Benoît Lutgen - had issued a charter concerning the collectors, a charter obviously impossible to enforce (as usual). But the warning was nevertheless very clear – no German uniform in the city!

On Saturday, the weather was terrible and there was not much to see. In the barracks at Bastogne, formerly occupied by the 1st Artillery Regiment (disbanded) and now called the Bastogne Barracks, Interpretation Centre of World War II of the Royal Museum of the Army, superb

Vivian Ghobert's Studebaker M29 Weasel driven by one of his grandsons in the Bastogne Barracks premises. (A.HdF).

Freddy Delaunoy's Ford M20 equipped with its superstructure canvas, an extremely rare item. (A.HdF).



The involvement of British and Canadian forces with Belgian SAS, north of the U.S. sector, is too often forgotten. (A.HdF).

The StuG III Ausf. F/8 of the Royal Museum of the Army is an exceptional piece but the great team of mechanics has yet to resolve a carburetor problem on the Maybach V-12. (A.HdF).





The museum's Cromwell in action. (A.HdF).



The first operation involving M24 Chaffees was precisely the 'Battle of the Bulge.' (A.HdF).



The Restoration Center inside the Bastogne Barracks is the theater of some splendid 'resurrections.' (A.HdF).



The exhibition hall inside the Bastogne Barracks. On the left, a French Renault UE as recuperated by the Germans in 1940, still in that delivery. (A.HdF)

exhibitions were organized. Also open was the famous cellar that housed General Anthony McAuliffe's CP, author of the famous 'Nuts' reply, when asked to surrender to the German commander. The museum's Vehicles Restoration and Exhibition Centers really deserve a visit, as the exploits of military and civilian mechanics are noteworthy. Regrettably for both all the collectors and Belgian taxpayers, tanks and other armored vehicles – restored at great public expense and masterpiece themselves, namely new this year, a Sturmgeschütz III Ausf.F/8 built in 1942 and running with its original Maybach V-12 gasoline engine – were only allowed to 'make rounds' around the parade ground. Their participation was cautiously limited to a few kilometers so as not to put undue wear on them. Their participation would have greatly benefited the public, including the reenactment on Sunday morning in Recogne and the military vehicles parade in Bastogne on Sunday afternoon. Future participation outside the walls



GMC CCKW-353 carrying a Caterpillar. Not easy to unload... (A.HdF).

of the barracks needs should be seriously discussed especially for the planned large 2014 edition of this event.

On Sunday morning, the village of Recogne, located 5 km north of Bastogne – famous for its German cemetery and bison farm – was the scene of a great recreation of the fighting that took place in the village in January 1945, the author of these lines being in charge



Victim of an engine failure, the M18 Hellcat could not participate in the reenactment organized in Recogne. (A.HdF).



A jeep loaded with paratroopers of the 101st Airborne replicates the atmosphere of that time in Recogne. (A.HdF).



This Mack NO proved very helpful in towing the M18 Hellcat. (A.HdF).



In Cobru, the Polish 'Panther' was used as background for several reenactment pictures. (A.HdF).



The author driving François-Xavier Jordens' OT-810, aka Sd.Kfz 251. An unforgettable experience! (A.HdF).



Among the approximately 250 reenactors involved in the recreation of fighting in Recogne was Serge Balleux armed with a Thompson. (A.HdF).



Under pouring rain, the 57 mm antitank gun operated by the Indian Head fires on the OT-810 (Sd.Kfz 251) and the Panther. (A.HdF).



The 'Germans' submergued the 'Americans' ... until the victory changed side in act 3. (A.HdF)



The V-12 Diesel 39 liters (581 hp) smokes more than the original Maybach V-12 gasoline engine (650 hp), but apart from the wheels, this Panther replica fits wonderfully in a reenactment! (A.HdF)



The gun of the 'Panther' fired several blank shots, with a nice effect. (A.HdF).

of the public address. Under the leadership of the association 'Ardennes Memories,' two clubs supervised the some 250 participants: the Duty First (chaired by Serge Balleux) for the American side and, for the German side, the HMRA and the Lufteaux (under the direction of François Xavier Jordens) who came with his OT-810, aka Sd.Kfz 251 half-track, that he invited me to drive, was truly an unforgettable experience. The centerpiece of the German side was a copy of Pz.Kpfw V Panther built by Poles on the basis of a Soviet T-55 bridge layer version. Bluffing! On the American side, the M18 Hellcat was the victim of a breakdown on Saturday (the engine needs to be removed), which a modification of the scenario and the intervention of a 57 mm

antitank gun towed by a Dodge. Over a thousand spectators came to this four-act recreation made lively by use of pyrotechnics.

On Sunday afternoon, the BMVT organized and led the WWII military vehicle parade in Bastogne, which was attended by nearly 100 vehicles. The crowd very much appreciated their efforts. And no participation fee was required.

The 2013 edition should be interesting but don't miss the big 2014 edition.

In the meantime enjoy this short film of the 68th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge shot like an actual war newsreel.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H\\_OHy5g9N-o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_OHy5g9N-o)



This VW 82 Kübelwagen proved poorly efficient in moving on the soaked ground. (A.HdF).

AM