

THE FORT CINDEY

**A stronghold, part of the historical fortifications
of St-Maurice**

Justification for a fortress

On the only possible direct route between the Franche-Comté and Piedmont, St-Maurice controls the northern entrance to the Upper Rhone Valley on the road through the Alps. This gave to this site its military vocation and was at the start of a permanent interest in building fortifications at this narrow point.

By the end of the 15th century, control of the passage consisted of an ordinary castle erected at the narrowing of the valley. Later the fortress reached progressively the heights and, in the 20th century, stretched from Lake Lemman (Lake Geneva) to the Grand-St-Bernard and Simplon passes. Eventually it would number several hundred forts, both great and small, all equipped with heavy artillery sheltered inside the rock. Together with Sargans in the East, the St-Gothard in the South, St-Maurice in the West was one of the so called « national fortresses ».

Three generations of fortifications at the gorge

- The castle was built in stages from 1476, during the Burgundian Wars, when St-Maurice, conquered by people from the upper part of the Valais, became a frontier town between Savoy and the Republic of Bern.
- In 1831, as there was again a risk of war in Europe, Switzerland adopted all the necessary measures to keep the passage neutral. Bastioned fortifications were erected at the gorge to control the bridge across the River Rhone, according to plans drawn up by G-H Dufour, an engineer and officer who became a general at the beginning of the 1847 civil war, known as the « Sonderbund » war.
- At Cindey, the fort was excavated and fitted out during World War II between 1940 and 1946. It took over the task of the original castle and Dufour's defences within the framework of a coherent system, including particularly the main forts of Dailly, Savatan and Scex, built and equipped starting from 1892.

The fort of Cindey in a few figures

The military engineer's intention : Together with the forts of Savatan and Toveyre-Petit-Mont situated on the right bank of the river, and with the troops in between, Cindey bars the northern approaches to the St-Maurice basin : field of fire also covers the natural anti-tank obstacles formed by the canal of the Rhone and the stream of the Courset and the artificial ones constructed on the roads and railways.

Dates

- construction 1941 - 1946
- rearmament 1948 - 1952 (2 guns 10,5 cm L 52 1939 / 46)
- end of service 1995

Garrison

1 fortress company with 173 men
(8 officers, 28 non-commissioned officers, 137 soldiers)

Fortress weapons

- 2 guns 10,5 cm L 52 1939 / 46
- 4 antitank guns 9 cm 1950 / 57
- 3 fortress machine guns 1951 / 80

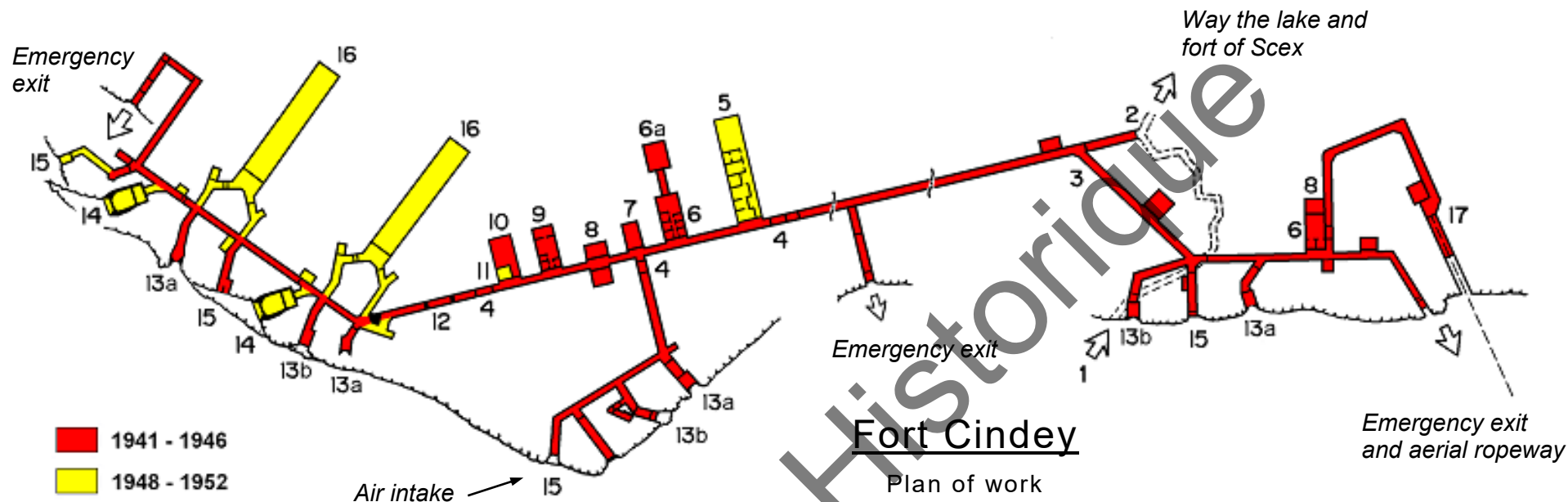
Mobile weapons

4 mortars 8,1 cm 1933

Points of special interest

Cindey is connected to the Fort of Scex, situated 1 km further south, by a natural gallery called 'Grotte aux Fées' which is prolonged by an artificial gallery.

The Fort Scex supplies Cindey with electricity and means of communication.



List of references

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| 1 | Entrance to «Grotte aux Fées» | 10 | Rations magazines, enquiries |
| 2 | Entrance to the fort | 11 | Gunnery command |
| 3 | Access to the northern gun-positions | 12 | Anti-blast air-lock-chamber |
| 4 | Anti-poison-gas air-lock-chamber | 13a | Infantry casemates (antitank gun) |
| 5 | Hospital | 13b | Infantry casemates (machine gun) |
| 6 | Men's sleeping-quarters | 14 | Artillery casemates |
| 6a | Water-reservoir | 15 | Observation post |
| 7 | Kitchen | 16 | Ammunition magazine |
| 8 | Filter room | 17 | Aerial ropeway |
| 9 | Dining-hall and head-quarters | | |