

FORGOTTEN 2

HOPE

Mapping Stonne by CptBocquier

In this series of dev blogs, we would like to share the large amount of research and effort that has gone into making our 2.6 French release as accurate as possible. The following mapping blogs give some explanations of our work and show some historical or gameplay details of the incoming maps. Of course those are nothing compared to the great informations that you'll find in the various books and websites that we will list in our bibliography down below. Note that some historical details are still being debated to this very day.

You'll find next the map Stonne, started by Sn00x and taken over by CptBocquier & Stubbmann, that depicts the 10. Panzer Division & Großdeutschland Division's struggle for the village of Stonne against the 3^e DCR & 3^e DIM in mid May, 1940.

Stonne

From the four maps presented by the French Hope to the FH2 Dev Team way back in late 2011, Stonne was the most promising map of the pack. Featuring a not-so-well-known clash between similar forces, where both sides could have taken the advantage, the map was also well thought from the start. So with a great story to tell and a good scenery, the only thing needed was to finish the map.

We're now in 2022, and I can say it was far easier than done ! But with the 2.6 patch release incoming and the French army finally making it into FH2, we are impatient to play with you, the community players, on Stonne.

After a long modding pause, I was back to FH2 modding in 2018 and in the first minutes had a look at Stonne. Stubbmann had already made some improvements on the map and kept doing so until today, helping me for example with the undergrowth, the light settings and some others features i'm still learning today.

At first i was focused on doing some gameplay adjustments like modifying the different flag position or the mainbases. But in those last years of development, i've focused my efforts on reproducing Stonne and its area in the most authentic way possible.

In this Devblog and after a quick historical brief, i'll try to mimic the pastime of some of our players, doing «Ingame versus Real life Pictures». I hope you'll appreciate the following pages and that we'll all enjoy the map and all its features together!



Ready to reenact Billotte's wild ride?

The battle for Stonne

In France, 1940 is a clear synonym of disaster. Naming the year out loud directly evocate two phenomena : «la débâcle» et «l'exode» (root and exodus). The root of the French Army, annihilated by Germany's superior materials & tactics, and the mass exodus of French civilians, bombarded by Stukas. From schoolbooks to popular movies, this image is well established in France and abroad. Still, we are occulting a part of what happened. In that regard, the battle for Stonne is an allegory of the France 1940 campaign.

Unknown to the public, the battle was a major clash between some of Germany's finest units against one of France's elite units. In the three first days of the battle, the small village would change hands 17 times. The French troops fought vigorously, stopping the German advance but unable to counterattack in force at Sedan. Veterans from both sides compared the battle as the «Verdun of 1940».

We're far from the «Tour de France 1940» myth. And this battle is far from being an unique case: Hannut, Gembloux, La Horgne, Monthermé, Lille & Dunkerque, Abbeville, Amiens, Saumur, Voreppe & Pont Saint Louis are some of the iconic places where the french soldiers showed their fighting capabilities and determination. Thus, it doesn't change the result of the campaign. But what makes Stonne unique in those battles? And why was this place fought over?

Located only 20 kilometers South of Sedan, the small village of Stonne is located on a ridge and is part of a natural barrier going East-West made of forests, cliffs, rivers and canals. One of the iconic landscape feature of the village is the long road climbing the cliff, with at the end a U-turn with a natural observation point, the «Pain de Sucre». This area was a fighting ground for centuries, with early traces of a Roman observation post in the IInd century. It continues in the High Middle Ages, the Thirty Years war and the Fronde. The night before the Sedan disaster of 1870, Napoléon III slept at Stonne. The village also saw the German occupation during World War I.

In May 1940, Sedan was one of the three main passages on the river Meuse (with Dinant and Monthermé) for the German PanzerDivision to rush through Northern France towards the Channel. After successfully crossing the Meuse at Sedan with the 1. and 2. Panzer Division on the 13th and successfully repelling suicidal air and tank counterattacks the 14th, the 10. Panzer Division and the Infanterie Regiment Großdeutschland (IRGD) are tasked the 15th to secure the high ground of Stonne and the forest areas known as Mont-Dieu & Mont Damion, protecting the southern flank of the main thrust.

In the meantime, the French High Command urged the 14th various units to the Sedan area to counterattack vigorously the German bridgehead. Stonne is a great starting ground for a counterattack, given its proximity to Sedan and the easiness to take defensive positions. The 3^e Division Cuirassée de Réserve (3^e DCR) & the 3^e Division d'Infanterie Motorisée (3^e DIM) would arrive late on the 14th in the area and will not counterattack yet, waiting for the logistics to replenish the tanks. At dawn on the 15th, both sides considered Stonne of vital importance, and would fight for it.



Stonne nowadays. The «Pain de Sucre» can be seen at the end of the road and the forested cliff

The main mapping concept

We'll leave here the historical background and the actual events of the battle to enter a bit more into the reproduction of the village of Stonne and how it would look like in 1940. I invite you to have a look at the various sources at the end of the document if you are interested in the battle and how it took place.

As you'll see in the 1940 pictures of Stonne, it was heavily damaged. Instead of reproducing its state at the aftermath of the battle in game, I wanted to show its state during the battle, giving the player the feeling that the battle is occurring and he is taking part in it. This concept forced me to compose between a lot of pictures (before and after destructions) and also to imagine what some of the features would look like at a certain time of the battle.

Since I also wanted to depict different timeframe of the battle in the different layers (what we call 64 players, 32 players and 16 players), I had to select the important feats of arms during the 10 days of fightings. Most of the actions in the village occurred between the 15th and the 17th of May, while the actions were more in the surroundings on the following days.

I selected for the main layer the days of the 15th & 16th of May, with the initial defence of the village by the 6^e GRDI and the 67^e RI and the various attacks and counterattacks by the French and the German units. Of course, the destruction and the wrecks would not be there in the morning of the 15th, but would quickly appear after the first fights.

The 32p layer depicts «Billotte's wild ride», the famous exploit where Capitain Billotte, commanding his B1bis n°377 «Eure» (41^e BBC) would knock out thirteen panzers in the village and two 3,7cm PaK AT guns.

At last, the 16p layer is located in Les Cendrières Farm. The 23rd of May, the 120 soldiers of the 7th Company (67^e RI) held during 3 hours the 1 000 soldiers of the I. Bataillon (79. Infanterie-Regiment).

The village layout

The aspects of the buildings (destroyed or not) would not really impact the layout of the town. Originally, Sn00x based his first sketch of the map on a recent satellite view (Google Maps). For quite a time, the map used this layout, even when we had taken over the map with Stubbfan. Everything was fine since the map mostly looked like in real life. The cliff was here, the road layout was on spot, the forests and the fields were well placed. Only a few farms seemed to have been built after the war.

But when I started looking to some new researches and archives (thanks to Seth Soldier for the latest), I've started to find a lot of differences between what was in game and the maps depicting the fights. Even the sources were contradictory. Luckily the IGN (French geographic service) allows you now to look through old aerial pictures, notably one reconnaissance mission from March 1940:



Stonne in early March 1940. The image above is a composition from six pictures taken from Remonter le Temps, IGN

This rapidly brought me to the conclusion that even if the countryside was nearly unchanged, the buildings were not in the same disposition. Some farms on the ingame map were also inexistant in real life, and some buildings were clearly not positioned correctly.

I then started to rework the Grande Rue (main road) building positions, adjusted the position of what would be the church, deleted an fictive farm at the crossroads area South of the village and fixed the topography in that location. Some of the buildings were repositionned, like at the South-East entrance. While our previous work was mostly based on nowadays views, now i had to look for old postal cards, old pictures and some archives to find how the village really looked like.



Stonne in early March 1940. The image above is a composition from six pictures taken from Remonter le Temps, IGN



Stonne ingame. Note that the map is a bit scaled to ensure gameplay distances between flags and mainbases.



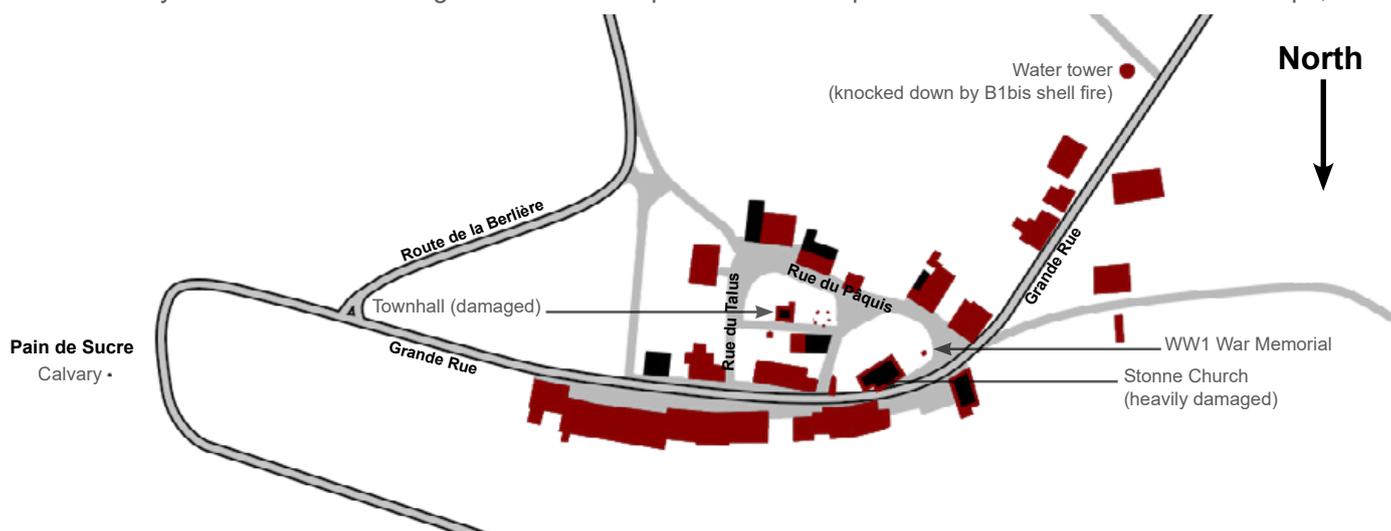
Stonne in 2019. Aerial view taken from Géoportail, IGN.

With a bit more in-depth analysis of these aerial pictures, it would also be possible to determinate the various destructions that occurred during the battle. Wrecks, unexploded shells and bombs from massive artillery and air bombardments made the village so dangerous that, in the afternoon of the 16th of May, both sides will leave the village a few hours to avoid unnecessary danger. Though the position was too vital to be left unoccupied, and soon infantry and tanks would try to take Stonne back.

This pictures were important to help me find the different points of view of the old postcards and pictures given by Seth Soldier. It was now possible to set precisely the various landmarks of the town, and change some houses to make them look more like in real life. It was still not 100% error proof, more on that later.



Stonne in early March 1940. The image above is a composition from six pictures taken from Remonter le Temps, IGN



Landmark elements and what seems to be the amount of destructions (red) at the end of the battle.



Stonne in 1950. Nearly all the ruins have been leveled. New farms and habitations were built around in the meantime.

Stonne Ingame versus In real life

With everything globally positioned, it was now possible to adjust the various statics to fit the different views i had available.

North-West entrance & the 'Grande Rue'

The North-East entrance of Stonne can be recognised in various pictures, with the black letters STONNE on a white rectangle painted on the wall. Though not every picture is the actual Stonne, since another village in the Ardennes (disguised to be Stonne) was later destroyed by the PK (German propaganda unit).



Stonne months after the battle (unknown source and timeframe). Found in Champs de Bataille 2nd GM n°7, page 25.



The North-West ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

The 'Grande Rue'



Stonne at the beginning of the XXth century. Postcard, A. Suzaine fils (editor), Sedan.



The Grande Rue (looking Eastward) ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

The 'Grande Rue'

This particular early 1900s picture made me rework and change the position of the building you can see in the background, helping me to give a bit more room around the church. I thought doing the woodshed ingame, but given the scale of the town it would have made the area a bit busy and I wanted to keep the possibility for a tank to pass at the right of the building and be able to aim towards the Grande Rue.

We can also note the presence of some two-storey house and even a three-storey one on the left side of the road.



Stonne in the early 1900s (unknown artist)



The Grande Rue (looking Westward) ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

Stonne Church - 'Notre-Dame de Stonne'

One of the most iconic landmark of a French village is the church. We made a news on May 10th 2021 named 'Bread and Wine' on the FH2 website detailing shortly the history of the building. You can view the news at : http://forgottenhope.warumdarum.de/news.php?id_news=582

The church took fire during the battle and the carpentry collapsed. Only the walls remained for quite a time after the war. For this static my goal was to depict the church in a stage between «intact» and «burnt down».



Stonne at the beginning of the XXth century (prior WW1). Postcard, A. Suzaine fils (editor), Sedan.

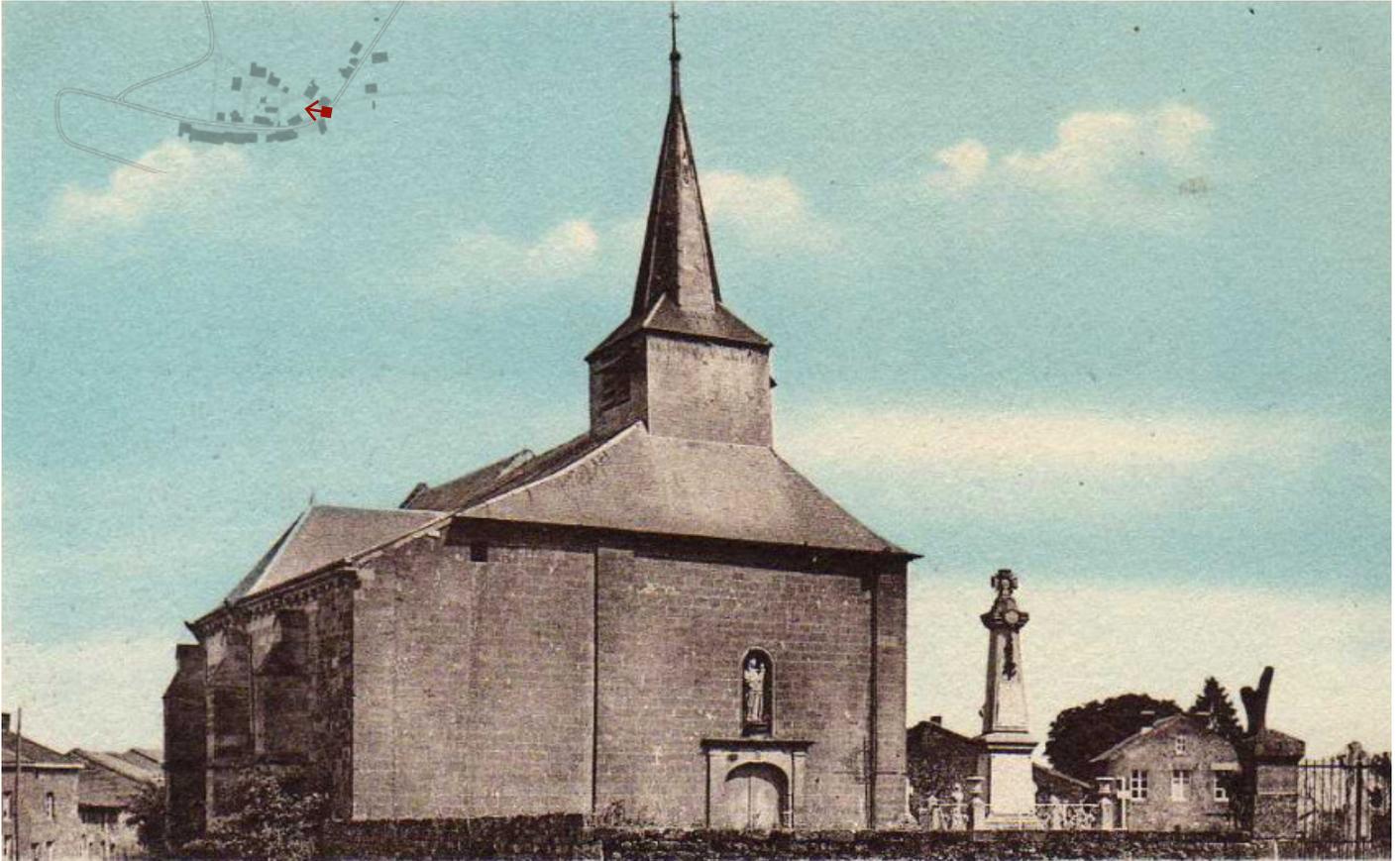


The Grande Rue and the church ingame



Stonne in 2009 (Google Street View)

The first iteration of the church was started in 2011 on a cheap modelling software. At that time i had a few experiences in modelling, but I hadn't all the pictures you've seen in the news and in this devblog.



Stonne church in the XXth century (after WW1). Note the war memorial and the townhall in the background



Church after the fights. Kindly sent by courier by the mayor of Stonne in 2011.

Thanks to the mayor of Stonne and to the researches made by Seth Soldier during my modding pause, it was then possible to understand better the architecture of the church. While i was focused on the mapping of Stonne, TomTom39 took the opportunity to make the church. With a lot of tries and retries he managed to design some features of the static : the window frames, the location of the staircases and the balcony. We have no intel if the staircases or the balcony existed in that shape or in that location.



The Stonne church ingame, used as the landing picture when a player joins to a round.

TomTom39 then gave me back the modelling project. After establishing the restricting dimensions I've started to considerate how the building was built and modified, how the carpentry was made, how you would access to the tower, etc. The wooden staircase proposed by TomTom39 was widdened a bit so players would be able to see each others while climbing/going down. Three entrances were designed, with two being part of the destruction process. In the end, holes were made in the roof and the masonry. With the smoke going up and the light pouring down, the church nave would be an iconic place of the map.

Notre-Dame de Stonne refers to the Virgin Mary, and a statue of Virgn and Child was above the main entrance. Thus one has to be made ingame.

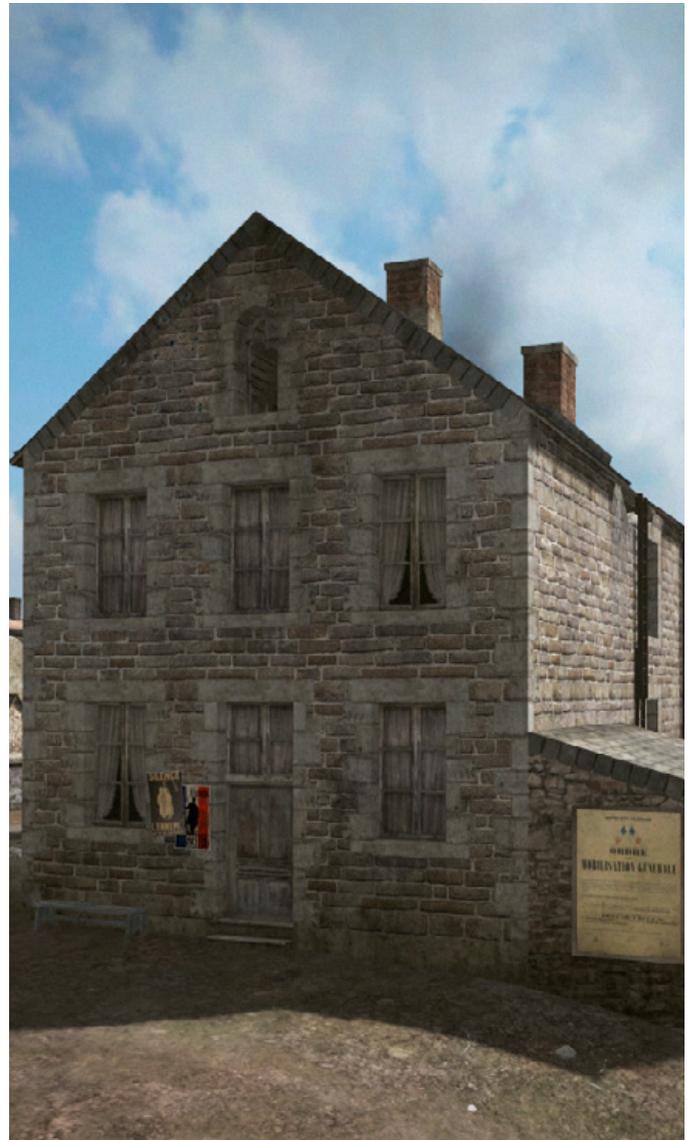
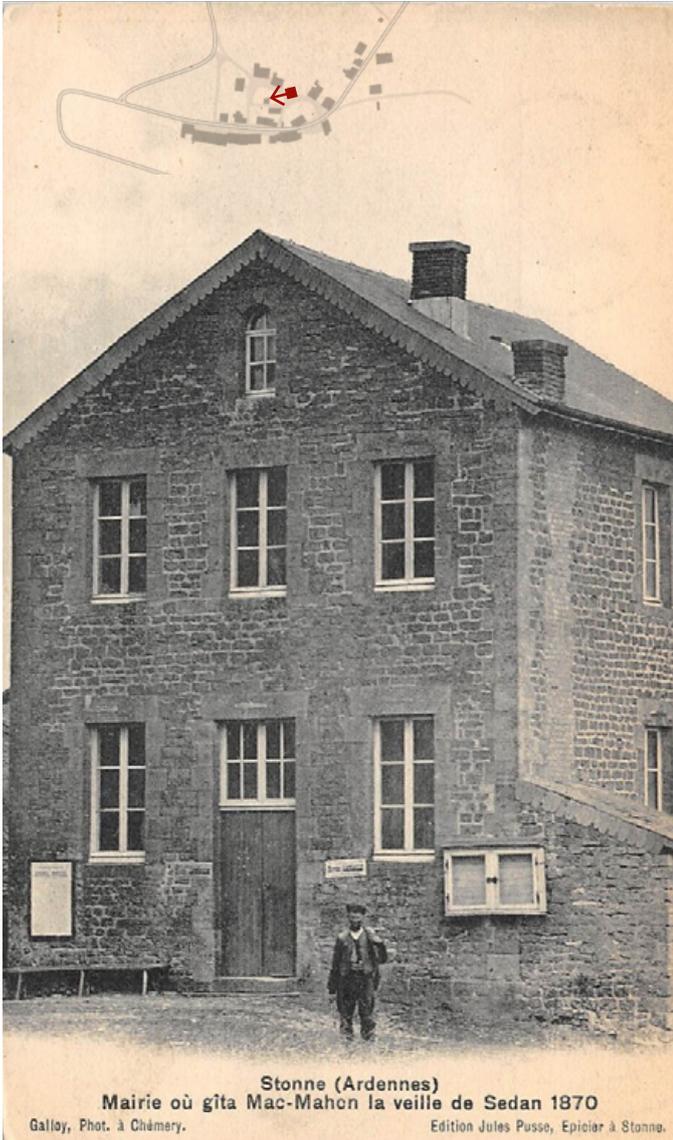
You have to note that it is not possible to replicate perfectly the scenery like in the old pictures. This is due to the scaling of the map, the church place was bigger in real life and the townhall a bit further away.



Virgin and Child statue ingame.

Stonne Townhall

Another iconic building on the church pictures are the townhall in the background. This is the last static done for the map ! I've made it based on only one close picture (see below). This is the actual building where Mac-Mahon (Napoléon III's Maréchal) slept before the battle of Sedan in 1870. The actual location was not clear for me, I had misinterpreted the aerial picture and set it on the other side of the Rue du Talus. Thankfully Olivier Debras from Bataille d'un Jour (documentary production focused on France 1940) pointed this mistake out, making me rework a lot this area and adjusting the topography.



Townhall (early XXth century). Postcard, Galloy & Pusse.



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

South-East entrance

This is another area that was modified multiple times to try fitting the in real life pictures and aerial pictures of 1940. Since this area is not tied directly to a flagzone, doing it was still worth it.

The South side of Rue du Pâquis was rather left untouched, given the statics available in FH2 and the low amount of picture of that side of the street. I also didn't want to modify too much this area given the gameplay elements linked to the static positions (flagzone and protected spawnpoints).



Stonne after the battle (unknown source and timeframe)..



The Grande Rue and the church ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

Water tower

The watertower is mentioned at multiple times in the battle reports : at multiple times, some german mg team held off from here until it was finally knocked down by B1bis 75mm shell fire. Unfortunately there is no close picture of the watertower before or during the battle but two photos from Sous-lieutenant Salaberry (6^e GRDI) who took the picture of a Panzer IV he had just knocked out with his 25mm SA34 AT gun on May 15th. TomTom39 decided to follow the general shape of the watertower existing nowadays, similar to what can be seen in the historical pictures.



Stonne, le 15 Mai 1940 documentary, Bataille d'un Jour



Panzer IV n°713 knocked out (Salaberry, 15th May 1940)



The water tower ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

The 'Pain de Sucre'



Calvary at the top of the Pain de Sucre in 2008 and ingame (looking towards Stonne)



The Pain de Sucre ingame



Stonne in 2011 (Google Street View)

Other building pictures

Here you will find three pictures depicting some issues i had:

- Unable to find the exact location. For example, the house were Napoléon III slept before the night before the battle of Sedan;
- Unable to reproduce precisely with the available statics (Cendrières Farm);
- Doubt about the location of the picture and can't really tell if it was in Stonne or not (Last picture).



Maison Nicaise (where Napoléon III slept before Sedan 1870), early XXth century. Postcard, Galloy & Pusse.



Cendrières Farm after the fights. Found in Champs de Bataille 2nd GM n°7, page 30. Area is still depicted ingame.



Stonne? Not Stonne? With what would be wrecks of the 6^e GRDI AMD 35 Panhard? Clearly not sure.

Roadsigns

Iconic statics like religious buildings, bridges or townhalls can help a player tell on which location he is playing in FH2. Other smaller statics like propaganda, adverts or road signs can also do that role.

Some of the iconic details in our Normandy maps are the concrete town entrance signs, with the town name marked on it. Those signs are part of a huge road signalisation process initiated by André Michelin (the founder of the famous pneumatic firm) after the First World War. At first it was a large concrete post, but it was soon declined in wall signs, panel signs, etc. Those signs are indicating town entrances, directions, important locations and so their shapes follow their functions.

These signs often had an indication of the département, the région or the various sponsors: Firms like Michelin, but also Touring clubs (for example the Touring Club de France or TCF), etc. The roadsigns were later uniformized after the Second World War, but some old signs like these are still used to this day.



Destruction of a roadsign by a French sapper 40km near Verdun. Found in Champs de Bataille 2nd GM n°7, page 6. But Michelin is not the only contributor of the french road signalisation, and it's not always concrete! Other firms involved in the car production like Dunlop, Peugeot, Renault and Citroën sponsored or manufactured some roadsigns, for the common good but also for the free advertisement.

The common features of those signs are the main color, blue, and the material, glass-lined steel (some wooden ones were also produced). Unfortunately these roadsigns suffered from multiple issues : they were more accessible for collectors, less robust than the concrete roadsigns, easier to damage or to destroy during wartime and so easier to replace for modernisation. One rather interesting fact is that some malicious hunters from the french countryside used these metal signs as practice targets, making some distinctive noises when a bullet hit the metal plate.

In Stonne, you would find roadsigns that were depicted in the 1940 footages, like Michelin concrete roadsigns or Dunlop metal roadsigns, helping differenciate more the location from our other french maps.



Roadsign near Stonne (unknown artist and timeframe, probably after the battle given the impacts).

Tank wrecks

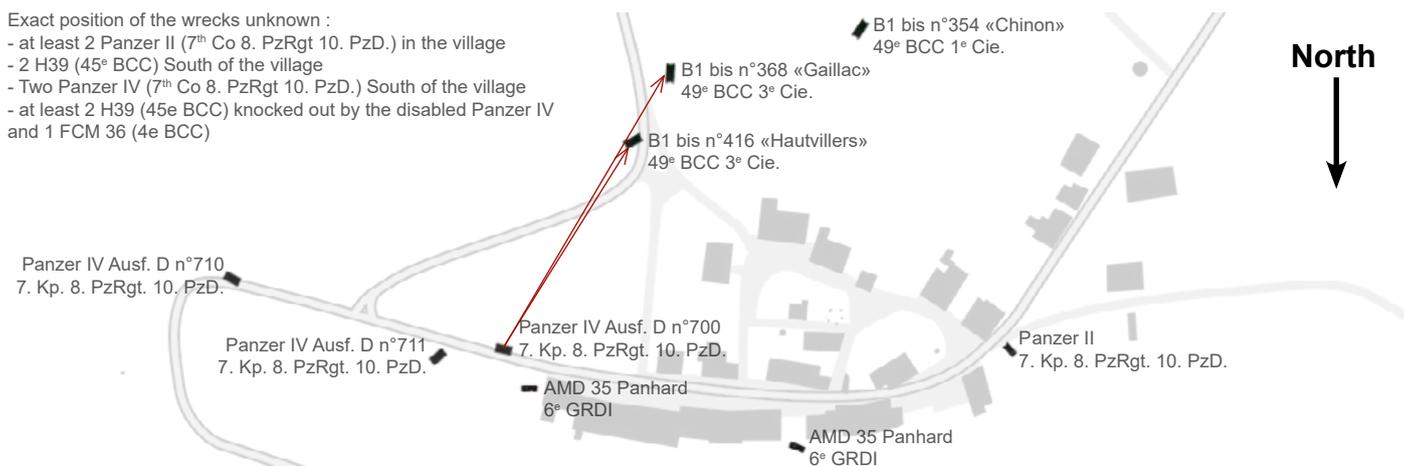
One of FH mappers recent trends is to push the detailing of a map by putting the various wrecks available in staticobjects in the actual location of real life wreckages, that can be seen in battle footages or are mentioned many times in battle reports. Some examples of this feature in FH2 are lhantala and Tali maps by Flippy Warbear and Hitmaker. By doing so, this allows us to go into the detailing of some the real actions that occurred in May 1940. Since my goal was to have the map depicting what would be the village in the first two days of the battle, and given the data available, I was able to locate some wrecks from the first German attack at 5h00 the morning of the 15th and some of the consecutive French counterattacks that followed at 5h20 (1st counterattack) and 9h40-10h00 (3rd and 4th counterattacks). The B1 bis are well located thanks to the Chars français website (www.chars-francais.net), while the german tanks had to be confirmed by photos and various sources.

The first german attack was constituted of five Panzer IV and five Panzer II and was ambushed by the well concealed 6^e GRDI and the 67^e RI with 25mm SA34 AT guns and AMD 35 Panhards. Six to seven tanks were taken out of action, while the French AMDs were destroyed. The remaining panzers of the column will be destroyed during the same day or early the 16th.

Two H39 from the 45^e BCC (sometimes called 45e BCCG for Gendarmerie) were knocked out during the 1st counterattack (without infantry) in the area of the water tower, by Pak 3,7cm AT guns. The B1 bis from the 49^e BCC are taken down later during the 3rd and 4th counterattacks. The 3rd counterattack was constituted only of tanks, while the 4th counterattack was a combined attack where the three B1 bis would be lost. Two were knocked out by a manned turret from a disabled Panzer IV, while the third is allegedly knocked out by one of the 3,7cm PaK AT guns of the 14. Panzerjäger-Kompanie led by Oberfeldwebel Hindelang firing at very close range. From here comes the myth of the weak point on the B1 bis being the ventilation shaft. I'll give you a more plausible hypothesis on the concerned tank, «Chinon».

Exact position of the wrecks unknown :

- at least 2 Panzer II (7th Co 8. PzRgt 10. PzD.) in the village
- 2 H39 (45^e BCC) South of the village
- Two Panzer IV (7th Co 8. PzRgt 10. PzD.) South of the village
- at least 2 H39 (45e BCC) knocked out by the disabled Panzer IV and 1 FCM 36 (4e BCC)



Estimated losses for the 15th May :

- French : 10-11 tanks (3 B1bis)
- German : 10 tanks & 7 armored vehicles, 6 AT gun

Tank wrecks from the first German attack & the French counterattacks confirmed by photos or reports.



Ingame minimap with the location of the historical wrecks (white) and other tank wrecks (red).

Panzer IV wrecks at the village entrance



The colorized picture shows various wrecks from the various German attacks on Stonne. We can see two Panzer IV Ausf. C (n°700 & n°711) from the 7. Kompanie of the 8. PanzerRegiment of the 10. PanzerDivision in the foreground, knocked out of action during the first attack on the village on May the 15th by the same 25mm SA34 AT gun.

In the background is one 4.7cm PaK (t) auf Pz.Kpfw. I (PanzerJäger I) from the PanzerJäger Abteilung 521 and the Panzer III n°621 Ausf E/F from the 6. Kompanie that reinforced with the 5. Kompanie the remains of the 7. Kompanie on May 16th and were surely destroyed by the Capitaine Billotte's B1 bis n°337 Eure from the 1^e Compagnie of the 41^e Brigade de Chars de Combat.

Given the location of the wrecks and the presence of the PanzerJäger I, we can guess that it was taken either during the fights or shortly after the battle, before June 1940 (it was allegedly taken on May 16th!).



Stonne Entrance, 16th May 1940 (?) Collection Akira Takiguchi, later colorized with the same view ingame.

Panzer IV Ausf. D n° 700

7. Kompanie 8. PanzerRegiment 10. PanzerDivision

The Panzer IV Ausf. D n°700 was used by Hauptmann Ottens, leading the column of five Panzer IV of the 1. Mittlerer Abteilung (n°710-711-712-713) and five Panzer II of the Leichte Abteilung (n°730-731-732-733-734), all from the 7. Kompanie.



It was knocked out of action at point blank range by Sergeant Durand's 25mm SA34 AT gun. Later in the days, Adjudant Karl Koch and two other tankists from n°711 will take place into the turret and use it against the incoming French counterattacks. He would destroyed one or two H39 from the 45^e BCC and one FCM36 from the 4^e BCC. Then three B1 bis will show up and he would fired multiple dozen of shells at them. At least two can be credited to his actions. The crew would later abandon the wrecks and join back their lines. This Panzer IV may have been identified has a live tank by Capitaine Billotte. After the battle it was put on the side of the road and cannibalized, remaining here at least until July 1940.



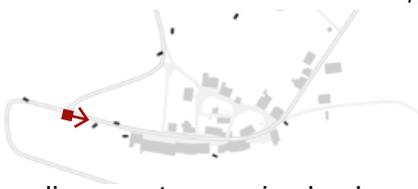
Panzer IV n°700, 19th July 1940, NARA, German archives. The same view ingame.

Panzer IV Ausf. D n° 711

7. Kompanie 8. PanzerRegiment 10. PanzerDivision

The Panzer IV Ausf. D n°711 was led by Adjutant Karl Koch and was the second panzer IV taken out of action by Sergeant Durand, at 100 meters from his AT gun. One of the 25mm shell hit the driver, who still managed to drive his tank on the right side of the road. Three of the crew would bail out, while the heavily driver would die of his wounds.

The radio operator was in shock and stayed a bit in the tank, and was later found dead by gunshot by Karl Koch going back on his tank to use the turret. He may have committed suicide or be shot by a French soldier while trying to leave the tank. The turret being damaged, Karl Koch would use the Panzer IV n°700 as a pillbox, grabbing ammunition from the n°711 from time to time. Some famous pictures depict this tank with 4 graves : Obergefreiter Herbet Ott (7.Kp), Feldwebel Wilhelm Heimberger (6. Kp.), Unteroffizier Georg Götze (7.Kp) killed on May 15th and Gefreiter Peter Hartschen, from the 3. Kp. of IRGD, killed on May 16th. One of these pictures can be seen on the loading screen of the map.

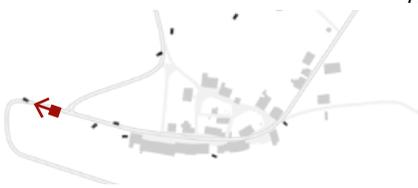


Panzer IV n°711, 19th July 1940, NARA, german archives. The same view ingame.

Panzer IV Ausf. D n° 710

7. Kompanie 8. PanzerRegiment 10. PanzerDivision

The last Panzer IV wreck depicted is the Panzer IV Ausf. D destroyed by Sergeant Durand's AT gun in the first attack. It can be either seen as the Panzer IV n° 710 led by Leutnant Dieter Risch. The tank took fire after receiving some hits and then blew up, propulsing the turret several meters away. All the crew would be killed in action.



The nearly instant loss of three Panzer IV will stop the column for a while, the two remaining Panzer IV (n° 712-713) would then follow the Route de la Berlière, with the n°713 lost South of the watertower, knocked out by Sous-lieutenant Salaberry's 25mm SA34 AT gun (he would then take some pictures of it). The Panzer IIs proceeded directly into the village, wrecking havoc on the infantry and destroying the two AMDs. They would later fall back by the same road, signaling an imminent attack by French tanks to Karl Koch who was trying to find a usable turret to fight back.



Panzer IV n°710, 13th June 1940, NARA, german archives. The same view ingame.

B1 bis wrecks at the South-West crossroads and the fields



After the successful but costly German attack, the French would counterattack (with multiple back and forth due to the lack of infantry support) with thirteen Hotchkiss H39 from the 1^e Compagnie 45^e BCC led by Capitaine Petit and Lieutenant Chambert later reinforced by ten B1 bis from the 1^e and 2^e Compagnies 49^e BCC. Two H39 are destroyed and two damaged early on by 3,7cm PaK AT guns and the remaining Panzer IV. Two hours later Karl Koch would take down at least two others H39 until a B1 bis appeared into his sights.

Two of the lost B1 bis that day can be accredited to him, B1 bis n°416 «Hautvillers» and B1 bis n°368 «Gaillac», while the third was allegedly taken out of action by a 3,7cm PaK AT gun from the 14. Panzerjäger-Kompanie of the IRGD. The «Chinon» can't be seen in that picture, the 1^e Compagnie attacking further West and would not enter the village on these attacks.



«Gaillac» and «Hautvillers» months after the battle, photo found on chars-francais.net. The same view ingame

B1 bis n°416 «Hautvillers»

2^e Section 3^e Compagnie 49^e Brigade de Chars de Combat



The B1 bis n°416 «Hautvillers» (a town near Reims, was previously named «Général Gouraud») was a part of the 3rd-4th counterattack on Stonne with nine other B1 bis led by Lieutenant Caraveo (leader of the 3^e Compagnie). The crew inside the tank is constituted of Sous-lieutenant Jacques Klein (commander) and Caporal-chef Émile Chanel (driver-gunner), the radio and driver-assistant being unknown.

The tank was knocked out by Karl Koch using the turret of the Panzer IV Ausf. D n° 700 as a pillbox and was allegedly the 5th and last tank he knocked out that day. During the fight, the tank got its turret damaged (47mm SA35 gun distorted, turret blocked), the left track was cut and a shell partially pierced the tank, hurting Caporal Chanel and setting the electrical installation on fire. All crew bailed out of the tank and was taken prisoner. The B1 bis later blew up.



«Hautvillers» months after the battle, photo found on chars-francais.net. The same view ingame

B1 bis n°368 «Gaillac»

1^e Section 3^e Compagnie 49^e Brigade de Chars de Combat

The crew of the B1 bis n°368 «Gaillac» (a town near Albi, South-West of France) was constituted of Adjudant-chef Jean Simon (commander), Sergeant Jean Mathis (driver-gunner), Caporal Pierre Mairot (radio) and Caporal Marie Schnoebelen (assistant-driver). The tank was the third one of the 1^e Section.



It is supposed to be the 4th tank taken out of action by Karl Koch. Really surprised by the «beast», the German crew would fire more than twenty shots before being able to untrack it.

The tank crew would be killed inside from an internal explosion. We can only guess what provoked the fire, it can be the a 47mm shell that exploded inside the tank once the gun was distorted, or actually one shot from Karl Koch who actually pierced. Karl Koch supposedly reported this incident on the «Hautvillers».

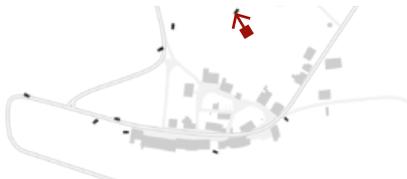


«Gaillac» months after the battle, photo found on chars-francais.net. The same view ingame

B1 bis n°354 «Chinon»

1^e Section 1^e Compagnie 49^e Brigade de Chars de Combat

The B1 bis n° 354 «Chinon» was allegedly one the tank knocked out by 3,7cm PaK AT guns led by Oberfeldwebel Hindelang, and the only one to be knocked out. Sous-lieutenant Yves Rohou (commander), Sergeant-chef André Ducasse (driver), Maxime Quevy (radio) and Chasseurs Roger Mauger et Henri Vanderbercq) were killed while bailing out.



Leutnant Borhmann would report that a AT gunner would aim at the right (!) side of the B1 bis into the ventilation grid (size of an ammo box !) and fire, provoking a fire inside the tank. Leutnant Borhmann was not in the action, and the Pak battery was actually firing at a FCM 36, explaining the weird details in the reports (position and size of the grid, B1 bis tanks not being this close from the watertower). «Chinon» was most probably shot down at 500 meters by a PanzerJäger I from the PanzerJäger Abteilung 521 in Stonne (like two other damaged B1 bis) and destroyed by Adjudant Chiaraviglio, commander of a H39 (45^e BCC).



«Chinon» months after the battle, photo found on chars-francais.net. The same view ingame

25mm SA34 AT gun emplacements

6° GRDI and 67° RI

One of the most impressive actions of May 15th is the strong opposition the 6° GRDI and the 67° RI had put early in the morning after the forced march of the 14th under enemy dive-bombers and against fleeing civilians and disbanded French soldiers. The first 25mm SA34 AT gun was commanded by Sergent Durand (67° RI), a former volunteer of the

International Brigade that knew how to deal with tank threat. With his gun hidden behind a dung hill, he held his gunner from firing until the Panzer IV n°700 was at a dozen meters, then took down n°711 and n°710 before retreating with the gun towed by a Renault UE, knowing his AT gun was spotted. The second 25mm SA34 AT gun (67° RI) was in the Grande Rue and surely followed Sergent Durand's shots. The last 25mm SA34 AT gun was manned by Sous-lieutenant Salaberry (6° GRDI) near the church and managed to take down a Panzer II that had rounded the village. Salaberry's AT gun would follow the soldiers retreat from the town under heavy fire and later destroy the Panzer IV n°713 South of the watertower.

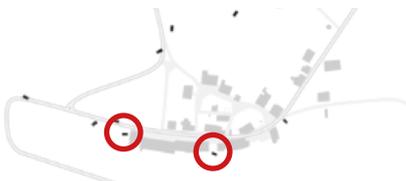


Sergent Durand's AT gun at the entrance and Sous-lieutenant Salaberry's ATgun with the destroyed Panzer II.

AMD Panhard 35 wrecks

6° GRDI

The 6° Groupement de Reconnaissance de Division d'Infanterie was one of the few GRDI fully motorized (only 7 were) and with armored cars (only 5) and was attached to the 3° DIM. On May 10th it was equipped with sixteen AMD 35 Panhard, sixteen AMR Schneider P16, four 25mm SA34 AT guns and two AMR 35 ZT 3.



Early in the morning of the 15th two AMD 35 Panhards were placed inside the village and would open fire on the German tank column and infantry after Sergent Durand's first shot. The one at the entrance was led by Sous-lieutenant Haberer (AMD 35 n°18031), who would be seriously injured by the Panzer II that rounded the village and that would wreck havoc in the French lines. The second one was led by Maréchal des Logis Deletoille (AMD 35 n° 18030) and was probably destroyed by another Panzer II. Sous-lieutenant Haberer and Maréchal des Logis Deletoille would die of their wounds.



Ingame locations of the two AMD 35 Pangard wrecks.

Conclusion

I hope you appreciated the efforts and details we've tried to put into the map to make Stonne what it would look like during the fights of May 1940. Before ending this blog i wanted to show you some rare pictures taken during the battle by Sous-lieutenant Salaberry behind its 25mm SA34 AT gun when he destroyed with Brigadier Lamoureux and Soldat Clément the Panzer IV Ausf. D n° 713 South of the watertower after retreating from the village. I wouldn't have found these without doing this devblog!



Salaberry's 25mm SA34 AT gun and Panzer IV n°713 knocked out South of Stonne. Salaberry, 15th May 1940
We hope you enjoyed this dev blog! 'Till next time!

References

Dominique Lormier, *Comme des Lions, Mai-Juin 1940, Le sacrifice héroïque de l'armée française*, Calmann-Lévy, 2010.

Musée de l'armée, *Comme en 40*, Gallimard, 2020.

Olivier Debras (producer & director), *Stonne, le 15 Mai 1940*, Bataille d'un Jour, 2010.

Serge Tignères (director), *Stonne, le Verdun de 1940*, Phare Ouest Productions, season 3 episode 3, 2018.

Dominique Lormier, Jean-Philippe Liardet, Stéphane Morhain, Vincent Bourguignon, *La Bataille de Stonne 14-25 Mai 1940*, Champs de Bataille Seconde Guerre Mondiale, n°7, February 2011.

Dominique Lormier, Jean-Philippe Liardet, Stéphane Morhain, Vincent Bourguignon, Brice Charton, Stéphane Commans, *Ardennes & Meuse, la France perd la Guerre 10-14 Mai 1940*, Champs de Bataille Seconde Guerre Mondiale, n°4, July 2010.

Remonter le temps, Institut National de l'information Géographique et forestière (IGN), 2022.
Available on: <https://remonterletemps.ign.fr>

Chars-français.net, *Classement individuel Chars B1 et B1 bis*.
Available on: <http://www.chars-francais.net/2015/index.php/classement-individuel/chars-b1-et-b1-bis>

Chars-français.net, *Les historiques, journaux de marche des unités et témoignages*.
Available on: <https://www.chars-francais.net/2015/index.php/journaux-de-marche/liste-des-journaux>

Forum ATF40 Armée française 1919-1940.
Available on: <https://atf40.1fr1.net/>

Axis History Forum, *Battle of Stonne 15-17 May 1940*.
Available on: <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=45336>

Alternat History, *The birth of a myth, history of the battles of Stonne*, December 2012. (in russian)
Available on: <http://alternathistory.com/rozhdenie-mifa-istoriya-boyov-za-stonn/>

Un Odieux Connard, *La bataille de Stonne*, Le Petit Théâtre des Opérations, Youtube, July 2017.
Available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lb6wvaw3G98>

The AceDestroyer, *French Char B1 tank Ace Billotte's wild ride at Stonne*, Tank Battles of WW2, Youtube, April 2019. Available on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay372KzM0cc>