Pompejus is a watchtower on Fort de Roovere in Halsteren, West Brabant. The tower looks out over the West Brabant Water Defence Line, the oldest part of the Zuiderwaterline running from Bergen op Zoom to Grave. Pompejus is a watchtower, an open-air theatre and an information point for tourists. Pompejus is named after the first commander of the fortress, Pompejus de Roovere.

**History**

The West Brabantse Water Defence Line was built in 1627 by the States of Zeeland and Zuid-Holland to protect the important shipping route from Middelburg to Dordrecht against attacks by the Spaniards and the French. The line included the cities of Bergen op Zoom and Steenbergen and a number of forts, including the main fort, Fort de Roovere and was the first landscape defensive work in which inundation was deployed as a defence strategy. Inundation is the submersion of the landscape so that armies can no longer pull through the landscape with their equipment. In the course of the centuries the Linie has been under fire several times, among other things against the Austrians, French and Spanish. In the beginning of the 18th century the water line became more and more important and was thoroughly strengthened by the famous fortress builder Menno van Coehoorn. Fortress the Roovere was reinforced and increased and several preliminary works were carried out. The West Brabantse Waterline is the only waterline in the Netherlands where ever has been battled, usually successful, sometimes not. In 1747 the line and the City fell under the siege of the French. In the 19th century the line was strategically depreciated. It disappeared in some places, others the forts were excavated. From 2010 onwards, one has started restoring the line. Forests have been taken from the forts, canals are restored. From that time on, the line is also developed for recreation.

**Landscape**

The line uses very subtle altitude differences in the landscape. This is possible because it is located on the edge of the Brabantse Wal, the edge of the deck sand in Brabant. The low parts can be inundated, on the high parts and therefore defensive weak parts fortified towns and forts were built. These fortresses are sand forts and were connected to each other with 'Linie dikes'. But also visually the forts were connected, you could look from one fortress to another. By afforestation this is no longer possible. Fort the Roovere was a central point in the landscape. The separation of fresh water and salt water inundation was here. It was the middle of the defence line, so from the fortress towards Bergen op Zoom and in the direction of Steenbergen could be looked at. This is no longer possible in the current landscape, which is why the plan came up of creating a watchtower here to make that possible again.

**Social system**

In order to make this project possible, a community has grown in Bergen op Zoom who participated in the creation of Pompejus. For example, crowdfunding has been used to let people sponsor Pompejus, companies have sponsored parts of construction such as transport or wood, schools have provided interns, but also organizations have provided interns and volunteers. People who want to use the Pompejus and Fort de Roovere in the future have been active to help the development. The aim was to make Pompejus ‘our tower’ and to connect with the residents of the surrounding area. This has been successful not only because the tower has been built, but above all because there is already an entire organisation to program the fort with events and it will be properly programmed and managed in the coming years.