

## In search of Fort Jaco

Too much of a coincidence really. The part of Uccle as you leave Brussels is called Fort Jaco for a reason but where was this fort? Who or what was Jaco?

Starting with Wikipedia:

*Fort Jaco was a fort built by Verboom in Uccle (Brussels), at the top of the Vivier d'Oie. It owes its popular name to Jacques Pastur (1659-1723), known as Jaco, a soldier-mercenary who was very active in the Forêt de Soignes. Dismantled around 1820, its memory lives on in the neighbourhood that today bears its name and the avenue Jacques Pastur, and in the past in the café du Vieux Fort-Jaco, at the top of the drève des Renards (from the nineteenth century until the 1970s), the café de l'Ancienne Ferme du Fort-Jaco (almost opposite the drève de Carloo), and the sanatorium Fond'Roy du Fort-Jaco, avenue Jacques Pastur.*

*The fort*

*In 1705, Maximilian-Emmanuel of Bavaria, who governed the region, ordered General Verboom to build a square fort measuring 40 metres on each side. The aim was to set up an advanced defence of Brussels, against the covetousness of the French, high up on an access road to the capital. Wide ditches and high embankments surrounded the fort.*

*After Fort Jaco was dismantled around 1820, Uccle began to urbanise and the old fortification gave its name to the district that grew up there.*

Let's have a look at some old maps to place it more exactly (and to check Wikipedia a bit). Here is part of 'Carte Particuliere des Environs de Bruxelles' by Eugène Henry Frickx (1706), three years after its construction and look what we have:



Just to the south of Vivier d'Oie you can see a square within a square at the top right of a diagonal inscription that reads 'Red de Worboom'.

Worboom is obviously an alternative spelling of Verboom, who built the fort. But 'Red'?

My money is on an abbreviation of some sort, much like you still get on modern maps so as not to clutter up the actual map with words. An abbreviation of 'Redoubt' for example so Verboom's Castle.

I looked at the Ferraris map of Uccle (1777) to see if it had survived. It had:



Bottom right there is a square with 'Fort' written beneath it.

The road leading towards it from the left looks to be from St. Job, going up the Montagne de Saint-Job before following the Vieille Rue du Moulin until ending at the terminus of the 92 tram. If you look carefully you can see a curved hedge with the number 92 repeated three times. This is now the Rue de Ham. You can see this here, courtesy of OpenStreetMap:



Oh look, Fort-Jaco is written exactly where the fort was. Should've just looked here rather than having spent a few hours of research on it!

But wait, the 92 tram and the number 92s on the Ferraris map? Is this another historical rabbit hole I'll disappear into, Alice?

The 92's on the map seem to refer to the fief (estate) of Roetaert at Neerstalle in Uccle, an 18th-century property encompassing about 11½ bonniers (about 16 hectares or approximately 40 acres) of arable land and meadows, including the Roetaert manor.

Sadly I doubt there is any connection with the 92 tram. Tram numbers followed a series with trams 90-99 serving the southeastern parts of the city and unless there was a very keen amateur historian working for the STIB...

Being of wooden construction and with the advancement of cannon technology, the fort would've become increasingly useless as a defensive structure and it disappears from the historical record around the start of the Napoleonic era.

A final footnote. Never ignore the obvious. The fort was located almost exactly where Avenue du Fort-Jaco meets the Chaussée de Waterloo and then continues as Avenue Jacques Pastur. Jacques was known more familiarly as 'Jaco'.