

## WARTIME TRENCHES OF NEITURI

Finland's neighbors, Sweden and Russia, had a big impact on Finnish history, and signs of being under both of their rule can be seen even today. The trenches of Neituri are such a sign. Seeing them is like going 100 years back in time.

It was a spring day in mid-March and the year was 1917. A horse appeared in the yard of Ahola and a Russian second lieutenant together with his interpreter stepped down from sleigh and walked in, while another soldier stayed out with the horse. People in the house knew right away who is in charge. Food on the table - and fast, for two in the room and for one in the kitchen. After the meal the second lieutenant with his interpreter went skiing and the wagoner was left in the yard with the horse. The result of skiing was clear: The trench building would start soon nearby.

The neck of land between Keitele and Northern Konnevesi lakes is about 1km wide. There is a northside downhill, sculpted by the ice age, and its top was a good place to watch, whether the Germans would attack Russia via Sweden as expected. Shortly after the second lieutenant's visit, about a dozen of soldiers and commanders arrived in the village. Local men were hired, too – and so the shoveling began.

In late summer the work was finished and almost 2m deep trenches and an outpost were ready. Even a well was dug nearby. The work was finished, but Russians guarded at Neituri until Finland's independence. Not a single shot was fired from that trenchwork.

Today the work of our fathers is a tourist attraction. Roadside signs near the Neituri Canal point the traveler to one of the details in our history – from the time, when locals tried to speak Russian, and one or two local maids enjoyed the company of a Russian man.

### In the pictures:

1. The pines in this picture have grown around the wartime trenches.
2. The road signs are pointing to the trenches at Neituri.