

Normandy

Volksbund Deutsche
Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V.



Reconciliation above the graves
Work for peace

German Military Cemeteries



La Cambe

Military Graveyards – away from the roads

Normandy is one of the most beautiful landscapes in France, and contains many cathedrals, castles and abbeys which are worth a visit. Characteristic, however, are its lush, green pastures, fenced with the banks and hedges typical of Normandy.

To the north, Normandy borders on the Channel, and to the west, on the Atlantic. Along the coast, the tourist comes again and again across relics of the Second World War: bunkers and fortifications which were erected by the German side. On the 6th June 1944, around 5 a.m., there began here the largest landing exercise in the history of the world, and thus the beginning of the liberation of France. The graveyards of many nations bear witness to this.

The map illustrates segment shows, in addition to the German military cemeteries, the graveyards of the then adversaries who took part in the war. The American Graves Service looks after two locations in this area. They are St. Laurent-sur-Mer on the Channel coast, and St. James near Mont St. Michel. Of the two Canadian graveyards, one lies also on the Channel Coast, on the D 35 near Reviers. The visitor finds the second graveyard on the N 158 between Caen and Falaise.



Nearby lies a Polish military graveyard. It was established for Polish soldiers who fell on the Allied side. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission looks after seventeen cemeteries in this region.

The fallen German soldiers lay at the end of the war in the departments Manche, Orne and Calvados in some 1,400 townships. In the year 1956, the German War Graves Commission began bringing together the dead in six graveyards in Normandy. The number of fallen soldiers is given in brackets. They are the graveyards Champigny-St. André (19,836), St. Désir-de-Lisieux (3,735), Marigny (11,169), La Cambe (21,145) Orglandes (10,152) and Mont-de-Huisnes (11,956).

This prospectus gives a description of the graveyards and their origin and layout. If you travel to Normandy on your holiday, do not forget that bitter struggles took place in this part of France, whose legacy – the military graveyards – are to be found away from the roads.

In December 1999, a severe hurricane caused large-scale damage to the sites in Normandy. Thanks to the readiness to donate of its members and donors, the German War Graves Commission was already able to rectify the damage in the following year.



Champigny-St. André

The military cemetery originated from the battles in August 1944 during the advance of allied troops on Paris and the Seine.

The American Graves Service buried both their own and fallen German soldiers at this location in two large grave sites. During the first years after the war the American dead were transferred to



the American soldiers graveyard St. Laurent-sur-Mer. The remaining German cemetery was later extended by the French authorities with the reburial of further fallen German soldiers from scattered field graves and from small grave sites. This includes all the German Army dead who were buried in the civilian cemetery in Paris during the time of the German occupation.

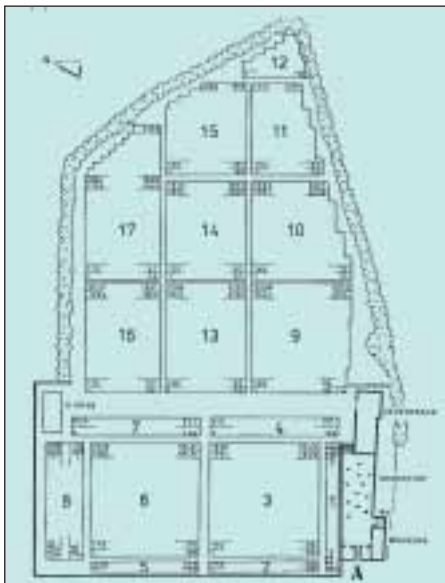
After the conclusion of the war graves agreement with France, further reburials of fallen German soldiers from the departments Eure, Orne, Seine-Maritime, Eure-et-Loire and Seine-et-Oise were carried out. In the west, and in part in the north, the site is enclosed by a wall, while on the remaining sides it is bordered by a bank planted with bushes, and a ditch. Bank and ditch were established in the year 1958 by an international youth camp. The rest area is located in the left entrance building to the left of the passageway. The registers of the names of the dead who are buried at the site are also set out here, and an overview plan gives information on the locations of the individual graves. The office of the German graveyard supervisor is also in the same building. Behind the entrance building lies the memorial courtyard, with great columns of travertine which name the various locations from which the fallen were brought to this burial ground. Crosses of a light oyster limestone each bear on both sides the names, ranks and dates of two dead resting next to one another.

In a total of 17 blocks of different sizes, 19,836 fallen German soldiers from the Second World War are laid to rest. The paved central pathway leads from the 16 meter high steel cross, which is visible from



both sides of the graveyard, between the graves to the „Kameradengrab“ (mass grave). 816 dead are buried here, of whom 318 could be identified. The names of these 318 dead known by name are recorded on stone tablets.

The war cemetery Champigny-St. André was inaugurated on 12th September 1964.



Champigny-St. André:

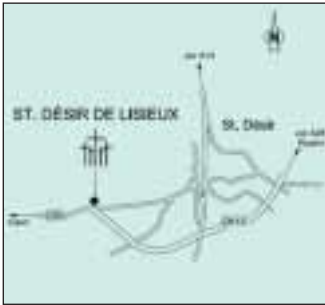
One of 19,809 victims A pilot does not return

15th June 1944: Warrant Officer Alfred Günther's Focke-Wulf 190 did not return from its mission in the Bayeux-Caen area. Eye-witnesses reported a dog-fight in which his plane was shot down. Aeroplane parts and bones were recovered from the river Loiret near St. Hilaire-St. Mesnil in 1973. The identity disc of Alfred Günther was not found until 1990. In 1992, his wife visited the graveyard for the first time.

Block 13, Grave 281

**if stones
could
speak...**

St. Désir-de-Lisieux

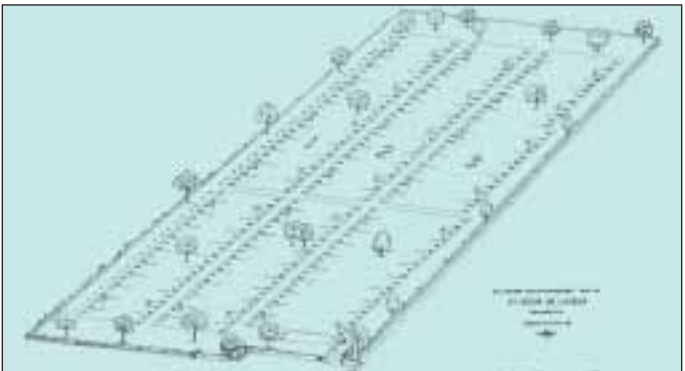


After the landing in Normandy and the retreat of the German defensive front, the Allies advanced towards the lower Seine. In the heavy defensive struggle which developed along the course of the Touques from its mouth as far as Lisieux, the German 15th Army, together with parts of the 7th Army, and the 5th Panzer Army, which had been able to withdraw from the

containment at Falaise, suffered heavy losses. The German soldiers buried by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission fell for the most part in these battles.



The military graveyard of St. Désir-de-Lisieux holds the mortal remains of 3,735 dead in three long-ranging blocks. The Commission has not undertaken any further interments here. In the years 1957/1958 it began the improvement of this graveyard. It was able to complete work on the site and inaugurate it on 21st September 1961. Crosses of red sandstone each bear on both sides the names, ranks and dates of birth and death of two fallen soldiers. In the immediate vicinity lies a small graveyard with 597 Commonwealth casualties.



St. Désir-de-Lisieux:

Two of 3,735 victims Hans and Werner Baumann

On 9th August 1944 Hans Baumann (19), 2nd Company, Pioneer Battalion 189, lay in position with his group by a machine-gun emplacement in the vicinity of Falaise. A shell struck. He and two other soldiers were killed immediately and were buried on the same day next to Quesnay Castle. Since the relocation Hans Baumann rests in Block 3, Row 22, Grave 697.

**if stones
could
speak...**

Werner Baumann (18) fell on 16th August 1944 in Le Bu-sur-Rouvres and was buried there as unknown. The German War Graves Commission was later able to identify him. Block 3, Row 42, Grave 1,304

Marigny

In the course of the landing battles, the American troops established two bridge-heads in the area of Ste.-Mère-Église and "Utah-Beach" as points of departure for suffocating the German troops on the Cotentin peninsula. Against heavy resistance, the American groups, advancing through Carentan towards Lessay, were able to cut off the German troops in the Cherbourg area.



The American Graves Service buried the soldiers who fell in this region near Marigny. In 1945/46, the American dead were relocated to the graveyard of St. Laurent-sur-Mer. In 1957, the Reburial Service of the German War Graves Commission relocated the fallen from numerous small graveyards and field graves to the military graveyard Marigny. In 1958 the German War Graves Commission began the establishment of the gardens and buildings. The graveyard was divided into five long blocks of graves, and surrounded with banks. The entrance building is drawn up in the style of the old Norman village churches, and merges with its quarry-stone masonry into the landscape. Ceramic grave markers which are embedded over the graves each bear the names, ranks and dates of birth and death of two dead. Groups of crosses are distributed over the whole burial field, in which 11,169 military casualties of the Second World War are buried. The inauguration of this military cemetery was on 20th September 1961.



Marigny:

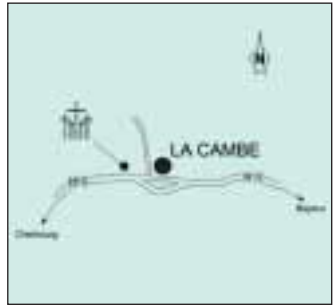
One of 11,169 victims Later identified

On 4th August 1944, in the region of St. Gregoire, the 37 year old Karl Kreller from Nuremberg was severely wounded in the back by the detonation of a grenade, and died. Because of the rapid advance of the adversary he was first buried in the graveyard of St. Gregoire as unknown, then transferred by the American Graves Service to St. James, and on 3rd June 1957 relocated by the Commission from there to Marigny. Karl Kreller was identified on 24th July 1970 with the help of information from his widow. It was possible to distinguish him from the other unknown soldiers by the shoe inlays which were found with him.
Block 4, Row 45, Grave 1,754

if stones
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speak...

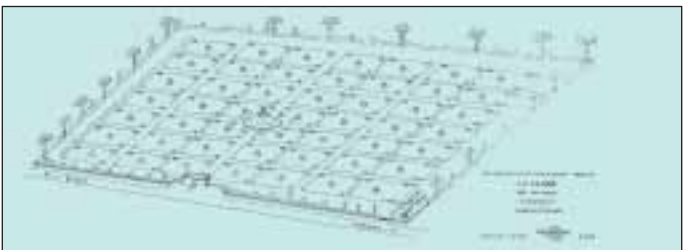
La Cambe

During the struggles of the invasion, the American Graves Service established two large cemeteries with fallen American and German soldiers in the neighbourhood of the village La Cambe, numbering 700 inhabitants, eight kilometers east of Isigny. After 1945, it relocated its dead to the newly laid out graveyard of St. Laurent-sur-Mer, and moved the fallen German soldiers from there to La Cambe. Thus there arose from the two cemeteries formerly occupied by Americans and Germans one American graveyard in St. Laurent-sur-Mer and a German cemetery at La Cambe.



The English, and later the French Graves Service undertook further relocations, so that at the start of the relocation work of the Commission, the cemetery at La Cambe, with 8,000 dead, had already become one of the largest provisional German military graveyards of the Second World War in France. Today, 21,145 fallen German soldiers are laid to rest in this cemetery.

The extension and laying out of the grounds made necessary a renewal of the surrounding bank. This work was accomplished in 1958 by an international youth camp. Under the motto "Reconciliation over the graves", young people from many nations helped the German War Graves Commission for the first time in the establishment of a cemetery in France. They also worked on building up the almost six meter high tumulus, which has taken in 207 unknown dead and 81 who are known by name in a "Kameradengrab" (mass grave).



On its peak stands a mighty basalt lava cross with two side figures. This graveyard was inaugurated on 21st September 1961.



La Cambe:

One of 21,139 victims “Cruel Fate”

The German prisoner of war Heinz Gnihl was to be released from Rubercy (near Trevièrs) on 25th March 1949, and allowed to return home. Since his train did not leave until the afternoon, he wanted to take the opportunity to do a favour for the caretaker of his lodgings, by burning old leaves and twigs. He lost his life in the explosion of a shell buried in the earth under the leaves. Block 18, Grave 352-353

**if stones
could
speak...**



La Cambe – Cemetery and Peace Garden

Well over 100,000 people died in the summer of 1944 during the battles after the Allied landing in Normandy - Americans, British, Germans, French, Canadians, Poles, and members of

many other nations. At least 14,000 French civilians fell victim to the struggles, above all to the heavy Allied bombing.



Exhibitions, monuments, books, postcards, films and souvenirs of the most varied kinds commemorate the events of the war in Normandy over 55 years ago. The exhibition in the Information Centre of the German military graveyard at La Cambe places neither the battles nor the weapons of war in the foreground. It does not glamorise military activities and speaks of no (military) tragedies. Rather, it shows, with

examples, what the war did to people – to the soldiers of all participating countries, to the French civilian population. It highlights personal destinies, and lets individuals speak. It shows the consequences of the war – but the pictures of death, suffering, destruction and military graves are contrasted with examples of reconciliation, understanding, and friendship.

On 21st September 1996, the day of the opening of the exhibition, the first 21 trees of the Peace Garden were planted. With the idea of the Peace Garden and the commitment of a donation of 250 Euro to sponsor a tree, the donors send out a living signal for peace.

Among the first "tree donors" were the then President of the German War Graves Commission, Hans-Otto Weber, the then Minister responsible for French participants in the war and French victims of the war, Pierre Pasquini, and the twinned German and French communities of Oberarnbach - La Cambe, Kindsbach - Grandcamp-Maisy, and Weilerbach - Isigny-sur-Mer.

In the year 2001, 1,200 maple trees are growing in the Peace Garden, and have a lasting effect on the area around the German military graveyard. This project, whose rapid and great success has surprised all those involved, is now complete. Since the idea of the Peace Garden has found great resonance among the friends and sponsors of the German War Graves Commission at home and abroad, and all the tree sponsorships in France have been taken up, the German War Graves Commission has started new projects.

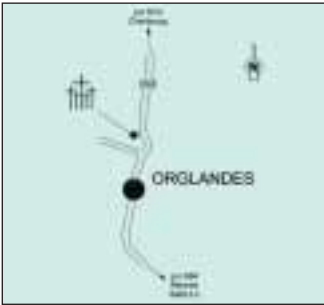
In 1998 Peace Gardens were opened in Budaörs, near the Hungarian capital Budapest, and Gross Nädritz (Nadolice Wielkie) near Breslau in Poland. Large collective graveyards are being established there.

In September 2000, the great military graveyard in St. Petersburg-Sologubowka was opened to the public. Here, too, trees grow for peace.



Orglandes

The soldiers who fell in these struggles were buried in the little village of Orglandes, numbering scarcely 400 inhabitants, in the department Manche.

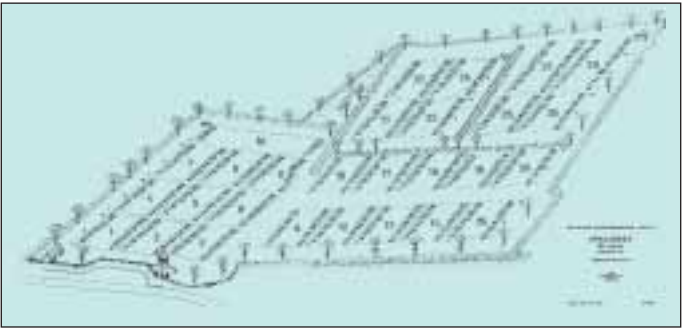


After 1945, there remained here only the German graveyard with 7,358 dead, while the fallen American soldiers were relocated to St. Laurent-sur-Mer. The French Graves Service occupied the areas made free with fallen German soldiers from field graves and smaller graveyards from the surrounding areas, so that the total number of German dead buried here now amounts to 10,152. The German War Graves Commission has not undertaken any further interments at this graveyard. The cemetery of Orglandes lies directly by the last houses at the northerly exit from the village.

The German War Graves Commission began the gardening and building works in the year 1958. The 28 grave fields lie in a wide-ranging grassed area. Stone crosses distinguish the graves. They each bear on each side the names, ranks, and dates of birth and death of two or three fallen soldiers.

This graveyard was inaugurated on 20th September 1961.





Orglandes:

22 of 10,152 victims

One stone bears 22 names. The date of death is the same for all names: 25th October 1945. Over five months after the end of the war, German soldiers were still dying - this time as prisoners of war. It is apparent from the death report of the 24 year old Corporal Werner Sorge that the 22 men lost their lives in a dynamite explosion in Asnières-en-Bessin near Bayeux. It is suspected that the men belonged to a mine-clearing commando.

Their bones cannot be separated and are buried in Block 27, Row 13, Grave 420/421

**if stones
could
speak...**

Mont-d'Huisnes

One kilometer north of Huisnes-sur-Mer, on a 30-meter high hill, lies the German military cemetery of Mont-d'Huisnes, which holds 11,956 fallen soldiers of the Second World War. It lies in sight of Mont St. Michel, one of the greatest monumental buildings of France.



Not far from here, at Avranches, during the struggles on the invasion front on 30th July 1944, the Americans made the decisive break through the German defensive front.

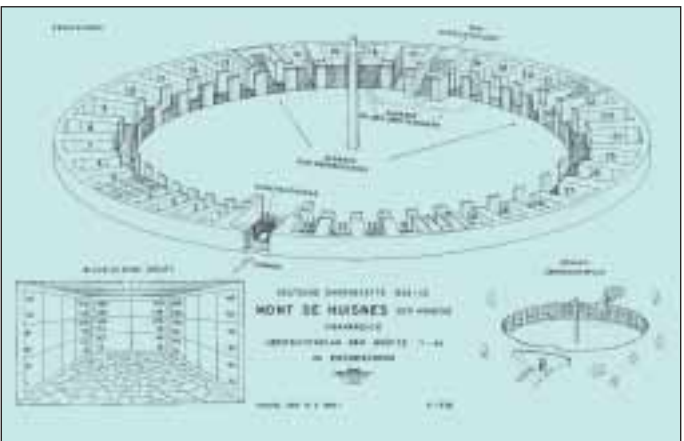
Mont-de-Huisnes is the only German crypt construction in France. Here are buried the dead who the Reburial Service of the German War Graves Commission relocated from the departments Morbihan, Ille-et-Vilaine, Mayenne, Sarthe, Loir-et-Cher, Indre-et-Loire, Vienne and Indre, and from the Channel Islands Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark,

with the exception of the dead from the graveyard of Fort-George in St. Peter-Port on the Island of Guernsey.

The crypt is a circular, two-storey construction of about 47 meters diameter. On its inner front in each of the ground and first storeys open gangways are arranged, behind which 34 crypt rooms are to be found on each storey. 180 dead are laid to rest in each of these crypts.



The names of the dead are set out on a bronze table in each case. A high cross towers in the middle of the grass-covered inner court. The memorial was inaugurated on 14th September 1963.



Mont-de-Huisnes:

One of 11,956 victims

Edmund Baton from Lauterbach (Saar) was evacuated with other pupils from his grammar school in February 1945 to the safer Bad Reichenhall because of the approaching front. But, without the knowledge of his family, he set out again with a school comrade for home. The pair came first to Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart. There, they had to hide themselves for eight days because of the heavy fighting. Edmund was able to convince the American soldiers to take them with them over the Rhine to Strasburg. From there, the two intended to travel home with the train, but were arrested on the way to the station (presumably by the French, or the American military police). They were brought across France to Poitiers. There Edmund Baton, only 14 years old, died in internment camp on the 14th July 1945, of hunger. His grave: Crypt 59, Grave number 90

if stones
could
speak...

English graveyards with fallen German soldiers

The British authorities established ten military graveyards on French soil during the Second World War which have a separate section with fallen German soldiers.

All these graveyards are formed in accordance with uniform outlooks. The graves are collected in great areas which are covered with the famous, carpeting English lawn. At the head of each row of graves, a strip around 80 cm wide is left out, in which the grave marker is set, and dog rose canes and other long-blooming low shrubs are planted. Each individual grave bears a grave marker on a flat section of light Portland sandstone, with precise information on the dead. The graveyards are dominated by high crosses in the Celtic form with superimposed sword; for the dead who were not of the Christian religion, a great memorial stone is laid out each time as a second central point.

The numbers of fallen German soldiers are given in brackets after each graveyard: **Bayeux/Calvados** (467), **Fontenay-le-Pesnel/Calvados** (59), **Hottot-les Bagues/Calvados** (132), **Douvres-la-Delivrande/Calvados** (182), **Ranville/Calvados** (323), **Ryes-Bazenville/Calvados** (325), **Cheux-St.-Manvieu/Calvados** (555), **Tilly-sur-Seulles/Calvados** (232), **Tourgeville/Calvados** (33).

The German War Graves Commission

- ... cares for the German war graves here in Normandy and nearly 100 countries all over the world.
- ... helps the next of kin in finding out about their relatives' fate and searches for their graves.
- ... works in the Eastern countries since 1990 when the borders were opened.
- ... finds the war dead and brings them to central cemeteries.
- ... advocates through its work understanding and reconciliation with former enemies.
- ... leads young people to war graves in order to make them understand the terrible consequences of war such recognizing how important it is to work for peace.
- ... finances its work almost exclusively with contributions of its members and donors and would be very grateful for YOUR help.

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