



1944

Across the years...



*Office de Tourisme
et de la Culture
Saint-Lô*



The **BATTLE OF NORMANDY** *in the Saint-Lô Agglo area*

**4 YEARS OF OCCUPATION, 4 YEARS OF COHABITATION
UNTIL 6TH JUNE 1944... THE ALLIES TOOK 44 DAYS TO LIBERATE
THE TOWN OF SAINT-LÔ AND THE SURROUNDING AREA...**

France was invaded in 1940 and the 7th Panzer Division, commanded by Rommel, was back in Normandy. The objective was to capture the port of Cherbourg, so the centre of the Manche Département was spared. During the night of 17th/18th June 1940, the Germans entered Saint-Lô, which had been evacuated by its garrison. The Bellevue Garrison, the former stud remount depot and the colleges of Saint-Lô were turned into prisons to hold around 20 000 French soldiers.



The mission **TO CAPTURE SAINT-LÔ** **AND ITS SURROUNDINGS**

(West, Centre and South) was given to the 19th Corps of the American First Army, under the command of Major General Corlett and Major General Gerow's 5th Corps.

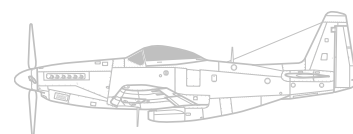


Marigny after the bombings

ON 26TH JUNE 1940, the Kommandantur (German Headquarters) was set up in the Town Hall. The Germans started construction of the Château des Commines Bunker for the headquarters of the 84th German Army Corps, which was established there in May 1942. The Hedgerow War (La Guerre des Haies) and Operation Cobra were essential phases of the Liberation that left irrevocable marks on our territory. The Americans decided to bombard the town, which was situated at a strategic crossroads, during the night of 6th /7th June 1944. The priority: to prevent German reinforcements stationed in Brittany to get to the Front. The Postal Service Resistance based in Beaucoudray succeeded in cutting the telephone cables, which cut off all communications between the Germans and Avranches and Brittany. Warning leaflets dropped the night before were dispersed by the wind and blown into neighbouring villages. There were between 400 and 500 dead. On 6th June at 4.30pm, 8.00pm and 10.00pm, and on 7th June at 12.30am, 3.00am and 5.00am, bombs fell on the town. Saint-Lô became the "Capital of Ruins"...

The surrounding villages were not spared: bombardments or fighting between tanks destroyed communities, demolished the houses. Churches, often used as observation posts, were targeted. The destruction and the ruins created a new landscape for our region in 1944...

From 19th to 21st June, a fierce storm almost completely destroyed the artificial harbours of Arromanches and Omaha Beach. In addition, severe weather around 9th July turned the land into fields of mud. On this date, the Germans told the inhabitants of Saint-Lô to leave the town.



THE ALLIES' PROGRESS

The Allies attempted to progress on the high ground around Saint-Lô: the 2nd US ID took Hill 192 at Saint- Georges-d'Elle (near the village of Le Grand Soulaire) on 12th and 13th July. Hill 122, near to the village of Les Ifs in Le Mesnil Rouxelin, continuously bombarded by the German Artillery, was not liberated until the 15th July by the 35th. The Martainville Crest (Crête de Martainville) was also the scene of fierce fighting for the Americans arriving from the North-East. The 29th US ID attacked the North-

Eastern sector of Saint-Lô near the Madeleine. A battalion known as the "Lost Battalion", led by Major Bingham, found themselves isolated near the Madeleine crossroads, without ammunition and with

little food. Around 6.00am on 17th July, Major Thomas D Howie's 3rd Battalion reached the Lost Battalion. The two battalions succeeded in joining up, but a mortar shell exploded close to the Major, mortally wounding him. The position then came under heavy fire, preventing any movement that day. That same day, Captain Puntenney, taking command of the 13th battalion, asked for support from the artillery and the air force to scatter the German troops. Even though the GIs were short of ammunition, they managed to take the Madeleine crossroads thanks to a mine depot abandoned by the Germans. The 115th regiment passed through La Luzerne, deploying at the bottom of the Dollée valley and on the East side of the road to Isigny-sur-Mer.

*DI= division d'infanterie

The liberation

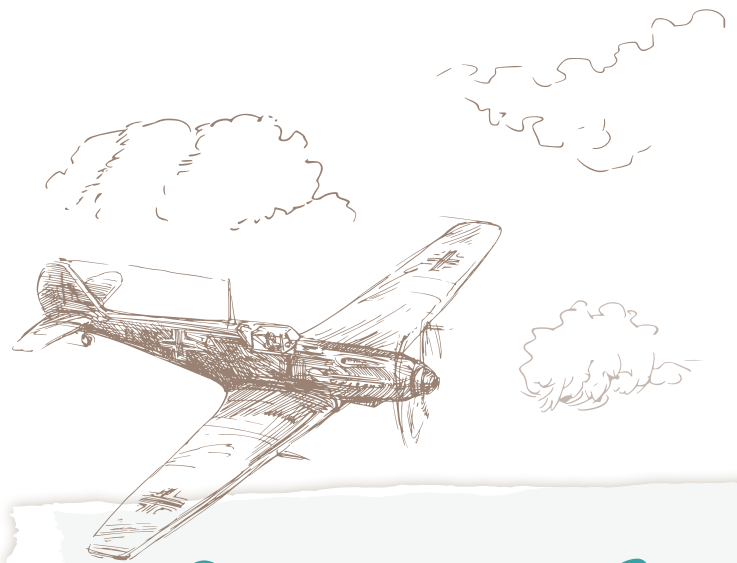
AFTER SOME ISOLATED FIGHTING, SUCH AS THE BATTLE OF 34 TANKS AT TROISGOTS, THE LAST COMMUNITY IN OUR AREA WAS NOT LIBERATED UNTIL 3RD AUGUST, THAT IS NEARLY TWO MONTHS AFTER THE LANDINGS.

ON 18TH JULY, a company of the 116th regiment re-established contact with the positions along the Madeleine, and the Germans retreated to the west and the south. An operational group was created on 16th July under the leadership of Brigadier General Norman D. Cota to form Task Force C. Around 3.00pm, tanks travelled along the road to Isigny, followed by ranks of soldiers. They arrived at Saint-Lô through the La Bascule area, near the Sainte-Croix Church.

The army regrouped on the Champ de Mars, and by around 6.00pm, controlled the eastern strategic points of Saint-Lô (the roads to Carentan, Torigni and Bayeux). Surprised by their speed, the Germans did not put up much resistance. Retreating to the hill at Agneaux and the high ground to the south of the town, the German artillery pounded the crossroads of Saint-Lô, especially the one at La Bascule, wounding several officers, including General Cota. So Major Glover S Johns, commander of the 1st Battalion of the 115th decided to set up a command post in the cemetery, in the cellar of the Blanchet family's burial vault. The body of Major Howie was laid on the remains of the Sainte-Croix church bell tower on 19th July to pay homage to his courage, since he had promised himself that he would be the first soldier to enter the town. The following day, the soldiers went through street by

street to clear out the German snipers who had attempted an unsuccessful counter attack during the night of the 20th.

At 4.40am, the 29th US ID left the town under the control of the 35th US ID.



Did you know...?

Late 1941 or early 1942, an event worth noting for its unusual character : It is the landing of a German plane on the Champ de Mars whose area was larger than today. In spite of everything, it required boldness and a great deal of control. The operation was carried out without incident under the astonished gaze of the Saint-Lois.

*RI = Infantry Regiment

THE INFANTRY DIVISIONS US

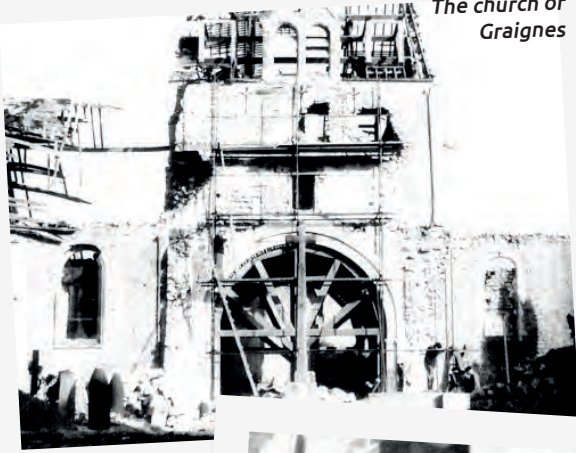
THE 29TH DIVISION, composed of 3 regiments (the 115th, 116th and 175th), posted between the road to Bayeux, Martinville and the road to Isigny-sur-Mer, led by Major General Gerhardt.

THE 30TH DIVISION, composed of 3 regiments (134th, 119th and 120th) posted to the north of the road to Périers, led by Major General Hobbs.

THE 35TH DIVISION, composed of 3 regiments (134th, 137th and 320th) to the west of the road to Isigny-sur-Mer, near the River Vire, led by Major General Baade.

The Eastern sector (from Cerisy-la Forêt to Saint-Pierre de Semilly) was mainly entrusted to **THE 2ND INFANTRY DIVISION**, led by Major General Keiser.

The church of Graignes



Soldiers and civilians help an old woman.



Soldiers at Sainte-Croix church - July 1944

TESTIMONIES



AGNEAUX *Léon tell us*

I was a boarder at the School of Institut of Agneaux, but we had been retreated to La Chapelle-sur-Vire because we had to leave the cities, the big buildings. When they saw it going wrong on June 6th, they said, "Kids, go home." They told me « you live nearby, in Moyon, you will go home on foot », I said « yes, yes », I was happy, it was the holidays! It was reckless, all alone!



CANISY *Angèle tell us*

I was 23 years old when I landed in June 1944. I was employed as a maid in the cow trade. I worked at Marie-Louise Marie in Le Boscq village in Canisy. Like every day, I was milking in a field near a wash house not far from home. At noon on June 6, while I was squatting to milk a cow, a shell fell on the wash house. The cow I was milking was killed by a shrapnel and the bucket containing the milk was spilled. I was very scared and I went back to my boss's house trembling. »



BEUVRIGNY *Allyre tell us*

It is on Wednesday, June 7th, that the big German hospital begins to be organised. They (Germans) climbed on the roof to put a huge red cross. The Americans know that the hospital also treats their wounded... The proof is given by planes that fly very low over the hospital (but do not attack it). One day, I remember very well, it must be a great German military officer that they bury, there are people in the field. We have about 60 civilians and 100 German men presenting weapons. The American planes flew over us but none fired. »



From **IMMOBILISATION** to operation cobra

Fighting was still continuing in the countryside. The Americans were bogged down, progressing very slowly and suffering heavy losses. The month of July 1944 was undoubtedly the most difficult and the blackest time for the Allies. The nature of the terrain, the Normandy "bocage" with its sunken tracks, its hedges that were difficult to get across and hid German tanks, is one explanation for the met difficulties. Once Saint-Lô is free, it became necessary to mount a massive, rapid attack to allow the American army to break through further south: to strike hard and fast like a cobra. So Operation Cobra was the codename given to the American offensive which opened the road to Brittany and hammered the German defensive lines.



THE BOMBARDMENT

was originally set for 20th July, but was put back several days because of bad weather conditions. On 25th July, the bombardment took place over a rectangle measuring 6.5km by 2.3km from Hébécrevon to Le Mesnil-Eury. From 9.40am for an hour, 1586 B-17 and B-24 bombers hit their targets, supported by 750 other medium bombers, fighter-bombers and 500 fighters: the greatest carpet-bombing in the Second World War was underway.

60 000 BOMBS OVER 12 SQ KM

of bocage, that is 5,000 tonnes of explosive napalm bombs and incendiary smoke bombs for each square kilometre. The shelling of the zone was followed by 1,100 pieces of artillery, transform the bocage into a desert landscape. The village of La Chapelle-en-Juger was wiped from the map. The American tanks, equipped with the new "Hedgecutter" blades developed by Sergeant Culin, tore up the hedges and then passed over the top of them.

THE GERMAN POSITIONS WERE DESTROYED

by the bombardment carried out by the armada of 2,500 heavy and medium bombers. The Panzer Lehr Division, Lieutenant-General Fritz Bayerlein's elite armoured division, was badly damaged. The 45-tonne Panther tanks were lifted up by the force of the blasts. In a few hours, 2,500 men were out of the fight, killed or wounded, and most of the tanks were destroyed. The Panzer Lehr Division temporarily ceased to exist as an operational unit. During the afternoon, the 9th and 30th American Divisions attacked the zone and despite everything, still encountered pockets of resistance.

BY THE FOLLOWING DAY

the American troops occupied the designated objectives, and General Collins sent three columns of tanks down a narrow bottleneck across the German front: the first column towards Coutances, and the second and third to guard and protect the flanks. Between Marigny and Saint-Gilles, towards Canisy, the Americans poured through the breach and struck out for the south.

Faced with the obvious threat of being encircled, the Germans left during the night of the 27th /28th July 1944.



PRESENTATION OF THE AMERICAN AND GERMAN DIVISIONS

and their itinerary

ON THE GERMAN SIDE

In the area covered by the current Saint-Lô Agglo, the German forces were part of the 7th Army, commanded by General Paul Hausser, who was responsible for the coastal defences in Brittany and Normandy. They made up General Dietrich Von Choltitz's 84th Army Corps and General Eugen Meindl's 2nd Parachute Corps. In all, around 20,000 men...



Abandoned german tank inspected by american soldiers

ON THE AMERICAN SIDE

OPERATION OF A US CORPS

1 REGIMENT = 3 BATTALIONS
1 BATTALION = 5 MILITARY COMPANIES
1 MILITARY COMPANY = 4 MILITARY SECTIONS

19th ARMY CORPS

29TH INFANTRY DIVISION

- 115th
- 116th
- 175th

INFANTRY
REGIMENT

30TH INFANTRY DIVISION

- 117th
- 119th
- 120th

INFANTRY
REGIMENT

35TH INFANTRY DIVISION

- 134th
- 137th
- 320th

INFANTRY
REGIMENT

3RD ARMoured DIVISION

Six american infantry divisions and two armoured divisions were present in the area (an infantry division is, of course, made up of around 15,000 men)



Hébécrevon
27 July 1944.
Jeeps and soldiers
of the 30th US ID.

Focus on 3 of these military divisions

29TH INFANTRY DIVISION

US "BLUE AND GRAY"

THE 115TH, 116TH AND THE 175TH REGIMENTS



This Division landed at Omaha Beach on 6th June. Most of the troops came from the States of Virginia and Maryland. These were the first soldiers to enter the town of St-Lô on 18th July 1944. On the orders of General Cota, General Gerhardt had ordered a motorised combat group set up (Task Force Charlie) to strike hard and fast inside the town. Task Force Charlie set out from Couvains on 18th July.

It had already seen action in the First World War, and owed its nickname "Blue and Gray" to its colours which symbolised the union between the Union and Confederate troops after the American Civil War, shown in the form of the Korean "yin yang" symbol.

Its motto: 29, Let's go!

35TH INFANTRY DIVISION

US "SANTA FE"

THE 134TH, 137TH AND 320TH REGIMENTS



This Division originated in Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri, and landed in France on 5th to 7th July at Omaha. They relieved the 29th Division between the Vire and the road to Isigny, and fought at La Meauffe and Le Mesnil-Rouxelin before attacking Hill 122. On 17th July, they took Rampan and controlled the Vire. Entering Saint-Lô through St Georges-Montcocq from the evening of 18th July, the 35th took part in the "complete mopping up" of the town. Their nickname, "Santa Fe" comes from the First World War. Most of the soldiers are descendants of the pioneers who had opened the route to Santa Fe. The white cross on a blue background (a white cross within a circle representing the Pioneers' wagons) was used as a marker all along the route to Santa Fe.

2ND US INFANTRY DIVISION

INFANTRY DIVISION

THE 9TH, 23RD AND 38TH REGIMENTS



They landed on 7th June at Omaha, and arrived on the edge of the Cerisy Forest at St-Lô on 11th June. They led fierce fighting at St-Georges-d'Elle, and on 11th July, attacked and captured Hill 192, to the North of the Le Calvaire at St-Pierre-de-Semilly, an important lookout post for the sector. The 2nd US ID is nicknamed "Indianhead" because of its badge. This division is the only division of the United States Army to be formed in France (on 26th October 1917 at Bourmont in the Haute-Marne Département, during the First World War). They were made famous in 1918 through their fighting in the Belleau Woods and at Saint-Mihiel. In 1944, they landed on the beaches at Saint-Laurent-sur-mer.

Their itinerary passed through Normandy, Brest, the Belgian Ardennes, then, in Germany, Gottingen, Leipzig and the liberation of Pilsen in Czechoslovakia.

Their motto is "Second to None", referring to their name: 2nd Infantry Division.

D-Day Landing Beaches

UTAH BEACH

OMAHA BEACH

Progress of the troops of the liberators

2^{DI}
29^{DI}
35^{DI}
30^{DI}

GRANDCAMP-MAISY

ISIGNY-SUR-MER

CARENTAN

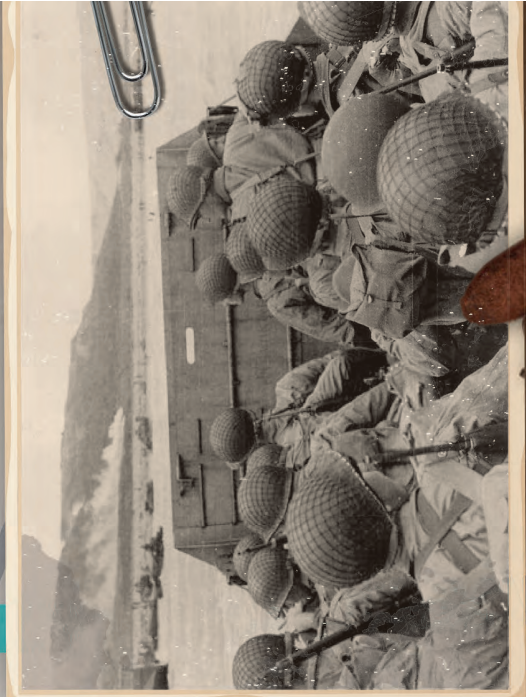
SAINT-JEAN-DE-DAYE

LISON

SAINT-CLAIR-SUR-ELLE

CERISY-LA-FORÊT

PONT-HÉBERT





- 29th US ID landed the 6th of June
- 2nd US ID landed the 7th of June
- 30th US ID landed the 11th of June
- 35th US ID landed the 5th/7th of July

- Stele
- Sites of memory
- Hills
- Date of liberation of town/village

Ex: Carantilly 28.07

Across THE TERRITORY

BEAUCOUDRAY

*Monument to the Executed Victims of the
Postal Workers' Resistance* FREELY ACCESSIBLE



In September 1941, a resistance network called "Maquis de Villebaudon-Beaucoudray" was founded. They were supplied with arms and explosives by the Allies, dropped by parachute around Tessy-sur-Vire and Pont-Farcy. During the night of the 5th /6th June 1944, Radio London broadcast a message that launched "Plan Violet", designed to sabotage lines of communication. Several cables were destroyed during the night by resisters. On 14th June at 10.30am, the Germans surrounded an abandoned farm in the village of Bois, to the north of Beaucoudray, on the edge of the Moyon Wood, and captured the members of the Resistance who were there guarding their arms. They were captured and executed. The statue of the Resistance, unveiled in 1947, was erected in the place known as "L'oiselière de haut", at Beaucoudray, and marks the actual place where the eleven members of the Saint- Lô PTT (Postal Service) Resistance were killed at dawn on 15th June 1944. This tragic story is written told on a sign at the site.

GRAIGNES-MESNIL-ANGOT

Franco-American Memorial
PLACE DE LA LIBÉRATION, FREELY ACCESSIBLE



On 6th June 1944, at approximately 2.30 am, approximately 160 parachutists from the 507 PIR (82nd Airborne) and 16 parachutists from the 501 PIR (101st Airborne) were dropped by mistake into the flooded marshes of Graignes and the surrounding area. Helped by the local population, they regroup in a defensive position around the church that dominates the marsh. After several skirmishes, three violent attacks by German troops (17th SS Goetz von Berlichingen) were launched on Sunday 11th June. On the night of the 11th to the 12th, the village was taken back. Some of the American fighters, short of ammunition, could reach Carentan through the marshes. The two priests of the parish, the battalion doctor and 17 wounded American soldiers were executed. 90 houses were destroyed, partly by artillery and fire. The village will be rebuilt further south and the ruins of the church will become, from June 12th, 1949, a Franco-American Memorial inaugurated by David Bruce, Ambassador of the United States in France.

THÉREVAL - LA CHAPELLE-EN-JUGER

German cemetery, FREELY ACCESSIBLE

Behind the gates of the German cemetery at Marigny (La Chapelle-En-Juger), lie more than 11 619 German soldiers. In a tree-lined setting, the cemetery is laid out in five blocks of tombs in straight lines and surrounded by banks. Groups of crosses are laid out there with different ceramic plaques bearing the name, rank and dates of birth and death of the soldiers who are buried there. The site is right in the middle of the area where the Military "Operation Cobra" took place, and was at first the burial place for 3,070 American Soldiers, who were transferred to the American Cemetery of Colleville-sur-Mer – Omaha Beach 1948 (or repatriated to the USA up to 1946).

Did you know ?

General Eisenhower installs his Headquarters in June 44 at the Château de la Boulaye in Cerisy-la-Forêt.



MARIGNY-LE-LOZON

The Cobra Memorial

OPEN IN JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST: FROM 2:30 P.M. TO 6:30 P.M. SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. ALL YEAR ROUND BY APPOINTMENT. PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE



This space is dedicated to the American Operation Cobra. There are numerous eye-witness accounts and contemporary documents available for examination in the Memorial over three exhibition rooms: one reception room with documents and a video of accounts of "Operation Cobra" on 25th July 1944, a memorial of the "dark days" 1939-1945, and an area reserved for the "Poilus" (French veterans) of the 1914-1918 War. There are 27 pictures, 24 showcases, 14 display grids, more than 600 photos, 350 written documents, 10 closed showcases, and 130 authentic objects of the period to explore.

LOCALITY "LA CAROSSERIE", NEAR CLOVILLE (SAINT- GEORGES-D'ELLE)

There is an orientation table on the D95 road describing the fighting by the US Troops to win Hill 192 on 11th -12th July 1944. (Freely accessible).

SAINT-JEAN-DE-SAVIGNY

Memory wall: memorial dedicated to the soldiers of the 29th us id.

TESSY-BOCAGE - PONT-FARCY

The Bailey Bridge

The Bailey Bridge is an English military bridge, remaining from the Battle of Normandy in 1944. It was used in the artificial port at Arromanches, then installed in the Normandy "bocage". 27m and 25 tonnes of steel that can be seen on the banks of the River Vire at Pont-Farcy. The Bailey bridge is a prefabricated, portable bridge, developed by the English in 1940-41 with a basic design for military use, stretching over a maximum distance of 60m. It does not require special tools nor heavy equipment for its construction. Its parts are small enough to be transported by lorry. The bridge is strong enough for tanks to cross it. It is considered as a model piece of military engineering.

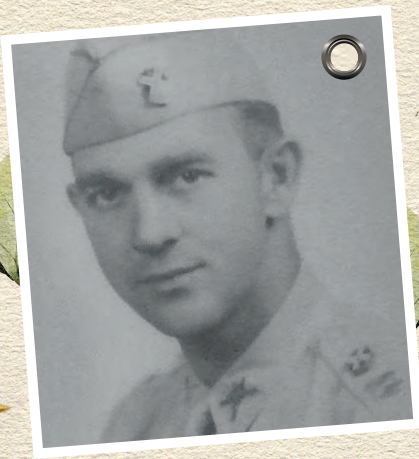
Monument in memory of the 35th US ID.

COUVAINS

In front of the church there is a plaque in honour of Frank Peregory, who was killed on 14th June 1944. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor (a Congressional medal), the highest military honour in the United States.

Did you know ?

The house of missionary priests of the Chapelle- sur-Vire became in 1944 a camp of American prisoners captured by the Germans in the marshes.



MAJOR HOWIE, "THE MAJOR OF SAINT-LÔ"

Thomas Dry Howie was born at Abbeville in South Carolina on 12th April 1908.

From 1929, he taught English and was a military instructor at the Staunton Military Academy, in Virginia. He joined the American Army Reserves in 1932. In 1934, he joined the Virginia National Guard, in the 116th Infantry Regiment, based at Staunton.

In 1941, the 29th American Infantry Division, to which the 116th Infantry Regiment belonged, entered active service. Thomas Howie was transferred with the regiment to England in September 1942. On 6th June 1944, he landed on Omaha Beach. On 13th July, he attained the rank of Major, Thomas Howie took command of the 3rd Battalion of the 116th. On 15th July, two of the three battalions of the regiment stopped their advance towards Saint-Lô for fear of a German counter-attack, but the 2nd battalion did not receive these orders and continued its advance, so that they found themselves isolated at the Madeleine crossroads.

On 16th July 1944, in the evening, Major Thomas Dry Howie, commanding the 3rd Battalion of the 116th Infantry Regiment (29th Division) received orders from General Gerhardt to lead the attack and capture Saint-Lô with the 2nd Battalion. On 17th July, Thomas Howie gave his orders to his soldiers, finishing by saying "See you in Saint-Lô". But around 7.45am, a mortar shell exploded, mortally wounding him in the back. His body was buried in the La Cambe cemetery, at that time a temporary American cemetery, before being transferred after the war to the American cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer. He was awarded a posthumous Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart, and also received the French Légion d'honneur and the Croix de Guerre with palm.

In SAINT-LÔ

1 MÉMORIAL OF LA MADELEINE



Information 02 33 72 52 55 - 02 33 72 52 66.

The Chapelle de la Madeleine is the remains of a former leper colony dating from the 13th century. It is listed as an historical monument, and is a Memorial to the soldiers of the 29th and 35th Divisions who fought for the liberation of the town. There are photos capturing the fighting and the liberation of the town, commemorative plaques, pictures and flags given by American nationals and veterans, as well as personal objects which belonged to them. A model shows the advance of military operations of the 17th to 18th July 1944 with an interactive illuminated route.

2 STREET GÉNÉRAL GERHARDT

On 18th July 1944, at the end of the afternoon, the 29th Division, commanded by General Charles Hunter GERHARDT, entered Saint-Lô by the Isigny road. A plaque fixed to the wall of the cemetery commemorating this event was unveiled on 4th June 1994, as part of the ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the Landings. This part of the road to Isigny was called the rue General GERHARDT from then on.

3 THE BLANCHET MAUSOLEUM



In the cemetery at Saint-Lô, rue Général GERHARDT, on the right at the entrance. Free unrestricted access.

Major Glover S. JOHNS Jr, Commandant of the 1st Battalion of the 115th Regiment of the 29th US Infantry Division, set up his command post in this mausoleum after intense artillery barrages forced him to leave the post at the Carrefour de la Bascule.

4 CIVILIAN VICTIMS' SQUARE

In the cemetery, beyond the central Carré Central des Militaires, turn left.

In the Saint-Lô cemetery there are the bodies of the civilian victims recovered from the ruins after the bombardments of 6th June 1944.

5 THE PRISON GATE



The prison gate, Place du Général de Gaulle, opposite the Town Hall. Saint-Lô Prison was built in 1824, and destroyed during the night of 6th /7th June 1944. The Germans had left nearly 70 prisoners locked up inside: 24 survived, and 46 bodies were found among the rubble, including 33 members of the Resistance. An urn containing the ashes of the prisoners was placed at the foot of the Gate. The Prison Gate has become a Départemental memorial to the Resistance in honour of the victims from this period.

6 SAINTE CROIX CHURCH AND MAJOR HOWIE

Saint-Lô was liberated on 18th July 1944. On 17th July, General Gerhardt ordered that Major Howie's body should be wrapped in a blanket and transported on the bonnet of a Jeep leading the convoy as it entered the town. On the morning of 19th July, the body, wrapped in an American flag, was placed on the ruins of Saint Croix Church. The photo of his wrapped body rapidly became an iconic image of the war in the United States. His name could not be mentioned because of the military censorship at that time, but also because the Howie family had not yet been informed of his death. The war correspondent of the New York Times, Drew Middleton, therefore named him "The Major of Saint-Lô". A plaque affixed against the wall of the church records the memory.

7 THE MAJOR HOWIE ROUNDABOUT



In 1947, the Military Academy of Staunton in Virginia decided to accord him a special honour by putting a bronze bust in front of one of their buildings. Several months afterwards, the Academy offered Saint-Lô an identical bust. Set up on 18th July 1948, it was placed in front of Saint Croix Church first of all, then, in June 1969, it was transferred to the crossroads which would bear his name from then on. The monument erected to him was unveiled during ceremonies in the presence of Major Howie's wife and daughter, and of General Bradley, commandant of the 1st American Army in 1944.

8 NOTRE-DAME CHURCH



When the first elements of the 29th Division entered Saint-Lô on 18th July, the church appeared very badly damaged: the vaults of the nave and the aisles had collapsed, the stained-glass windows in the apse and side walls had been torn out... but the 2 towers remained intact! The north tower fell during the evening of 18th July, and the south tower lost its steeple during the day of 19th. Should they be rebuilt? Yves-Marie Froidevaux, Manche Département Historical Monuments (Monuments Historiques de la Manche) architect, explains his views: "The west façade of the Notre-Dame Church will carry the stigmata of the 1944 drama for generations to come ... It will be a wounded cathedral ... A cry, a prayer for peace". When approaching Notre-Dame Church in Rue Carnot, a shell is visible, embedded in the angle of a buttress.



Did you know ?

Le Château de Beuvrigny, which has belonged to la Gonnivière family, became a military hospital in July 1944.



9 THE ROUNDABOUT OF 6TH JUNE

The monument dedicated to the civilian victims of 6th June 1944, up against the rock face beneath the Tour des Beaux- Regards, was unveiled in 1969. Some people talk of 463 victims, others of 800...

10 THE TUNNEL

The tunnel is situated near the Tourist Office. Not accessible to the public. Nonetheless, a virtual visit is available on the Tourist Office website: www.saintlo-tourisme.fr

In March 1943, the Germans decided to dig a tunnel under the rock. With five German civilian overseers, around fifteen French and foreign workers, most of them part of the STO (Forced Labour Service), worked on this project until June 1944, probably to set up an arms and ammunition dump. During the afternoon of 6th June 1944, a German officer agreed that the patients in the hospital opposite the rock face could be transferred there. During the night, they were joined by those who had fled from the burning town. Some 700 people were sheltered and cared for there.

11 FIRST STONE OF THE RECONSTRUCTION

This is fixed near the intersection of Rue Saint-Thomas and Rue Valvidemesle, to the left of the "Bistrot 59" restaurant. Inaugurated by President Vincent AURIOL on June 6th , 1948.

12 FRANCE-UNITED STATES MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



The hospital is situated in Rue Dunant, in the direction of the Route de Villedieu, and the fresco is freely accessible. Built with a financial contribution from the Americans, the France-United States Memorial Hospital was opened on 10th May 1956. Its functional and aesthetic architecture still looks modern. A huge mosaic produced by Fernand Léger pays homage to peace and Franco-American friendship. Among the vibrant colours of the French and American flags, two hands are stretched out, full of hope, towards a Normandy symbolised by a branch of apple blossom.

13 THE IRISH HOSPITAL

Monument at the entrance of Collège Pasteur – rue Maréchal de Lattre de Tassigny. Until June 1944, Saint-Lô hospital was on the banks of the River Vire, opposite the Tour des Beaux-Regards among the ramparts. After the establishment was destroyed, the inhabitants of the town and surroundings were treated in very insecure conditions. From the beginning of 1945, the Irish Red Cross made an offer to the French Red Cross to set up a hospital, made up of twenty-five wooden buildings, and provide personnel and equipment. The Irish hospital opened for business at Christmas 1945. It was directed by Colonel Thomas McKinney, and employed 12 doctors and surgeons, 23 nurses and 7 administrative staff, including the famous writer Samuel Beckett. The hospital was handed over to the French Red Cross on 31st December 1946, while awaiting the construction of the France-United States Memorial hospital.

14 THE VILLAGE OF HUTREL

Take the Route de Tessy, the last road on the right before the ring road Le Hutrel is one of the rare villages remaining intact which preserve the memory of the inhabitants of Saint-Lô fleeing the bombardments of June 1944. Thousands of them passed through here in a few hours or a few days and still remember the solidarity and comfort shown to them by the inhabitants of Le Hutrel.

15 THE EXECUTED VICTIMS WALL

On the Route de Tessy-sur-Vire, a sign on the left saying "Mur des Fusillés" (Executed victims Wall).

On the Route de Tessy-sur-Vire, a sign on the left saying "Mur des Fusillés" (Executed victims Wall). The track leads to a shooting range near which a remembrance stone has been erected commemorating the sacrifice of 30 members of the Resistance executed here during the occupation.

16 ART ET HISTOIRE MUSEUM

Place du Champ de Mars – Open all year, Tuesday to Sunday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. In July and August from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. The museum is closed on Mondays and on 1/01, 1/05, 1/11 and 25/12.

Part of the Museum features this period of the history of Saint-Lô: the Occupation, the Resistance, the bombardments of 6th June 1944 and then the Reconstruction. It presents numerous documents and objects in a layout enabling visitors to visualise these events. Go back in time and walk in the old streets of Saint-Lô, relive the destruction of the Second World War and observe the city's rebirth.



Anecdote

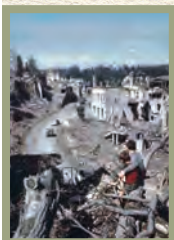
General Gerhardt, commander of 29th US DI, adopts a stray puppy and nicknamed DDay. As the mascot of the 29th, the soldiers owe him a debt of gratitude. The very picky General, on the safety of his soldiers, insists on the helmet always be attached. Dday serves as an alert... When soldiers see it coming, the General is not far away. It was better to attach his jugular to the risk of being reprimanded.



The staff of the Irish hospital

MAP OF SAINT-LÔ

Itinerary of the liberation and memory



This photo of two children scanning the Rue des Noyers in August 1944 is one of the most famous in Saint-Lô, both in France and the United States. After fleeing the bombings of June 44, Max and Jean Robin (aged 13 and 9 at the time) returned to Saint-Lô to find their home. Passing through the Rue des Noyers, they are stopped by American reporters taking pictures. Seeing the two children alone, they asked them to climb a tree branch overlooking the street as the Americans passed through the ruins of the town of Saint-Lô. It would be 70 years before the identity of these two children would be known.

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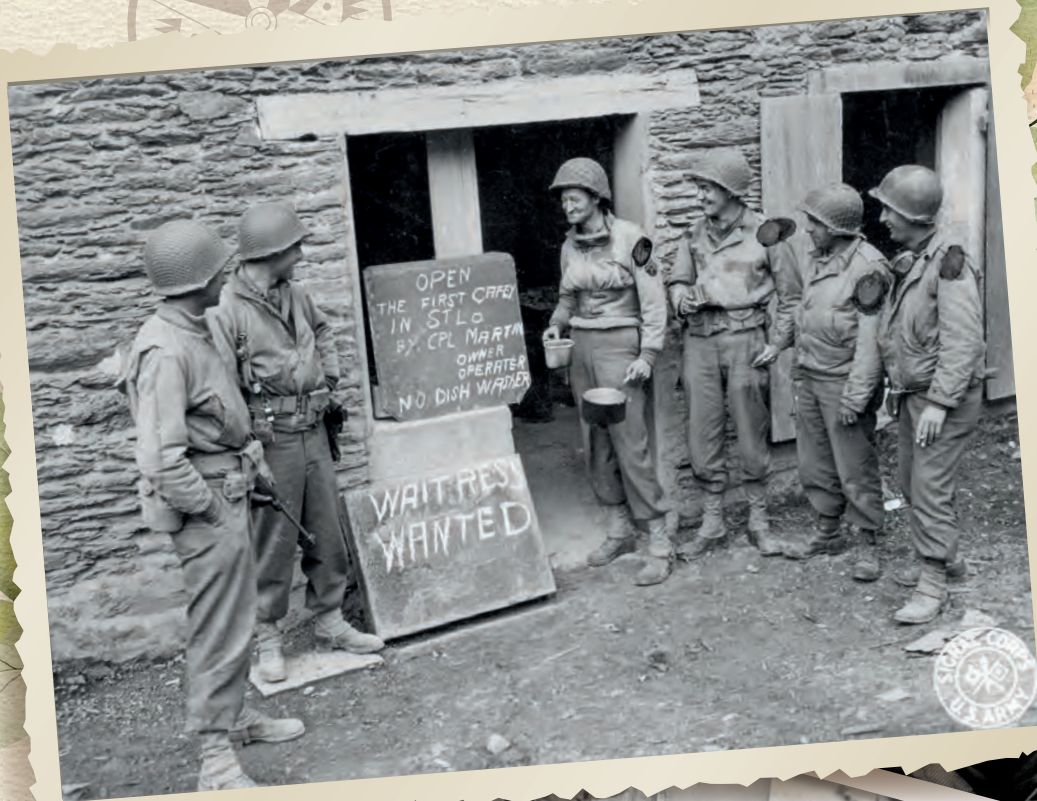
This booklet is designed for tourists and visitors wanting a better understanding of the battle of Saint-Lô to recapture the historic communities. It is not meant to be a scientific study. The whole team warmly thanks Michael Yannaghas for his help.

1944



2024





To continue

immersing yourself in this period, listen to and read these eye-witness accounts :

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