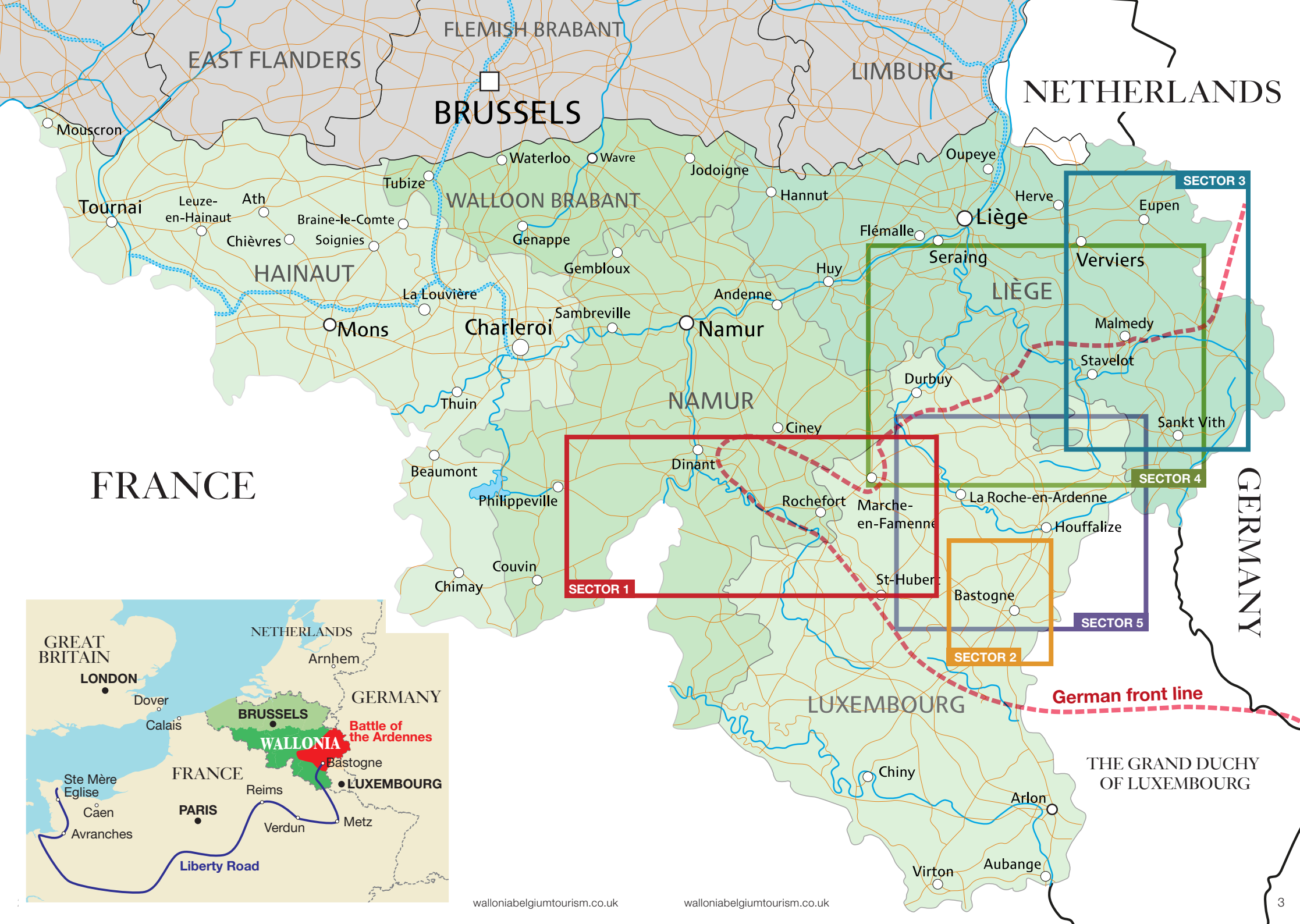




The Battle of the Ardennes

DECEMBER 1944 – JANUARY 1945

The beginning of the end



“The Battle of the Ardennes was certainly one of the most difficult in which I was ordered to participate and where the stakes were significant.”

Field-Marshal Bernard MONTGOMERY
Commander 21st Army Group

“Without the willpower and determination of these men to stop a numerically superior invader, a different chapter would have been written in history.”

Major-General Troy H. MIDDELTON
Commander, US VIII Corps



Some of the wreckage in Sankt Vith, Belgium after the liberation in December 1944 © NARA

Welcome

The Battle of the Ardennes - the final military confrontation of the Second World War in Europe - took place on Belgian soil between 16 December 1944 and 28 January 1945. It was the decisive engagement in the defeat of Hitler's Third Reich.

Every year, in Bastogne and Manhay, La Roche-en-Ardenne and Hotton; in Houffalize, Malmedy, Marche-en-Famenne, Bure and numerous other towns and villages in Wallonia, we remember. We remember with emotion, reverence and respect for the soldiers who came from overseas to bring peace to our region, and paid a very heavy price.

This brochure will guide you from one landmark to another, from memorial stones to monuments, from museums to military cemeteries. And here and there it highlights some outstanding tourist attractions that make present-day Wallonia such a rewarding place to visit.

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American Infantrymen near Amonines © NARA

The Battle of the Ardennes

The Allied landing that began in Normandy on 6 June 1944 was a resounding psychological defeat for the German Army.

Within a month almost a million Allied soldiers were in action in France, and for the most part the Germans were forced to retreat. To begin with Allied progress was slow, but then came a lightning breakthrough across northern France and Belgium.

In the centre was the 1st US Army of General Hodges; on his right the 3rd US Army commanded by General Patton; on his left the 2nd British Army headed by General Dempsey.

Paris was liberated at the end of August; freedom came to Tournai, Brussels and Antwerp in early September; Mons, Namur, Liège and the Ardennes were liberated by the end of the month.

After a hasty retreat, the German units established their defences behind the Siegfried Line. The 1st Army of Hodges captured Aachen, while Patton's 3rd Army prepared to invade the Saarland. Between the two fronts, General Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, took the calculated risk of

weakening the sector, believing that the difficult terrain and wintry conditions would dissuade the German Army from launching a counter-attack in the Ardennes.

But the German High Command had other ideas, and drew up plans for a large-scale offensive. They would strike through the Ardennes, cross the River Meuse, sweep across Belgium and recapture the key port of Antwerp. This would prevent the transport of troop reinforcements and fresh supplies of fuel, munitions and food for the Allies, and it would separate the British and American armies, forcing one or both to capitulate and sue for peace on the western front. The German Army could then be transferred to the eastern front to halt the progress of the Russians, who were moving steadily towards Berlin.

It was a daring plan that some historians consider bordered on the reckless: success would depend on several factors going the Germans' way. They needed low and long-lasting cloud cover to prevent the intervention of Allied aircraft; a rapid initial breakthrough to capture the Allied fuel dumps; the control of important crossroads and the subsequent widening of the breach. ➤



American Infantrymen entering Saint Hubert © NARA



Generals of the 101st Airborne Division reviewing troops of 101st Division in Bastogne © NARA

➤ The main thrust of the German offensive was to come from the 6th Panzer Army of Hitler's former chauffeur and bodyguard, Field-Marshal Dietrich, which would have to cross the Elsenborn ridges and the River Meuse between Huy and Liège. The 5th Panzer Army commanded by General Von Manteuffel was given the task of capturing important crossroads at Sankt Vith and Bastogne, crossing the River Meuse between Dinant and Andenne, and advancing towards Antwerp via Brussels.

The northern flank of the offensive would be covered by the 15th Army of General Von Zangen. On the southern flank the 7th Army of General Brandenberger would have to withstand any possible counter-attack by General Patton's 3rd US Army.

In order to create confusion, specially-trained groups were to create mistrust and suspicion among the American troops. These groups were the commandos of Colonel Skorzeny, dressed in American uniforms and using captured GI equipment, who were to seize the bridges of Huy and Aday to enable the crossing of the German armoured columns.

To oppose any American reinforcements coming from the north and moving towards the combat zone, it was foreseen that Colonel Von der Heydte and his 800 parachutists would drop onto the Hautes Fagnes, the peat bogs in the Ardennes, and control the crossroads at Baraque Michel.

By night, observing radio silence over several weeks, the German High Command brought in around 250,000 men, 600 tanks and assault guns, and 1,900 field guns and howitzers.

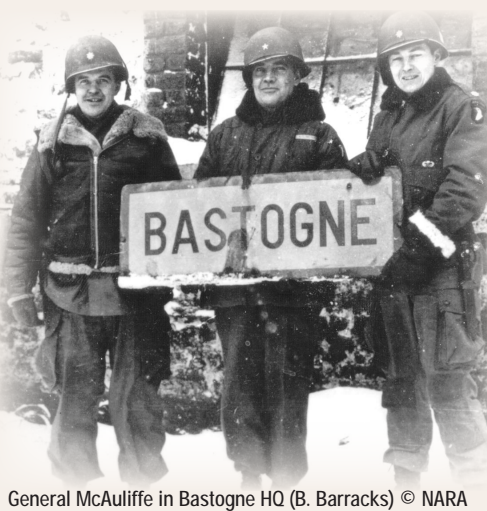
The German offensive finally began on the freezing, foggy morning of 16 December 1944 over a front of about 80 miles. Codenamed *Wacht am Rhein* (Rhine Guard) the fierce conflict would later be known as the Battle of the Ardennes or, in American parlance, the Battle of the Bulge.

A heavy artillery barrage pounded the American forward positions, followed by the infantry onslaught and the breakthrough by the armoured columns. The 6th

Armoured Army of Field-Marshal Dietrich, consisting of the 1st Panzer SS 'Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler', the 12th Panzer SS 'Hitler Jugend', the 2nd Panzer SS 'Das Reich', the 9th Panzer SS 'Hohenstaufen' and the Volksgrenadier Division, sped towards the River Meuse.

At the same time, on the left flank, the 5th Armoured Army commanded by General Manteuffel advanced towards the Meuse with its Panzer Lehr Division - the 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions supported by Volksgrenadier Divisions.

The Americans were caught unawares. The 2nd and 99th Infantry of General Grow's V Corps, the 106th, 28th and 4th Infantry, and units of the 9th Armoured of General Middleton's VIII Corps numbered in total 80,000 men, but their defences were penetrated at several points before they were able to organise effective resistance. The British, meanwhile, were training for the forthcoming German campaign some distance to the north in the Netherlands. The two Allied armies had been separated, just as the Germans had planned. ■



General McAuliffe in Bastogne HQ (B. Barracks) © NARA



SECTOR 1

The British in the Battle

The British contribution, limited in numbers, pressed for time but stamped with the authority of its charismatic Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Montgomery, cannot be underestimated.

On 20 December 1944, Montgomery ordered the British 30e Corps, under the command of General Horrocks, to leave the Netherlands and move towards the combat zone in the Ardennes. By 22 December, the 51st Highland Division, the 53rd Welsh Division and the Guards' Armoured Brigade took up defensive positions between Maastricht and Givet to try to prevent German troops from crossing the River Meuse. The 6th Airborne Division, who had been resting in Great Britain, received the order to move to the Ardennes.

On 3 January 1945, in the cold and snow of the Tellin-Rochefort-Hotton triangle, the British 30e Corps launched its counter-offensive. The 6th Airborne Division, the 53rd Welsh Division and the 51st Highland Division, with their supporting armoured units, moved towards the front. The 43rd Wessex Division was held in reserve.

On 16 January, with the battle almost won, Montgomery withdrew the 30e Corps from the Ardennes and sent them back to the Netherlands to prepare for the long-planned offensive into Germany and the crossing of the Rhine.



1 Exhibits in the Spitfire Memorial Museum

1 Florennes

On 25 December 1944, the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry armoured regiment arrived in Florennes, and were quartered in the aerodrome buildings before moving to the combat zone to support units engaged in the counter-offensive. Built in 1942 by the Luftwaffe and liberated in September 1944 by American troops, the aerodrome would be used by the Fighter and Bomber Groups of the US Airforce.

Spitfire Memorial Museum

Located in the aerodrome buildings, the Museum displays a 1944 MK XIV Spitfire as well as various aircraft that have figured prominently in the Belgian Air Force. The Museum also covers the history of the aerodrome and of the squadrons that were based there, with many display cases containing photographs, documents, flight-equipment, model aircraft and souvenirs. Visits must be booked in advance. Check the website for opening hours.

www.museespitfire.be



1 The Spitfire Memorial Museum



2 Stone marking the furthest advance of the German offensive and reminding us that the Germans never crossed the River Meuse. (At the foot of the 'Bayard Rock')



3 Panther Tank of 2. Panzer a few metres from where it was blown-up, reminding us that the German breakthrough was permanently stopped at Celles. (Celles crossroads)



5 A headstone dedicated to the 13th Lancashire Battalion Parachute Regiment commemorating the 61 men who died in the liberation of Bure. (Major Jack Watson MC Square)



5 'Croix Renquin', a monument erected to the memory of the Belgian SAS paratroopers killed on 31 December on a reconnaissance mission to protect the flanks of the British 6th Airborne Division. (On high ground to the south-west of the village, via Rue de Mirwart and Rue des Roches)

2 Dinant

During the evening of 23 December, at the foot of the 'Bayard Rock', a jeep-load of Germans wearing American uniforms forced their way through a checkpoint and detonated a daisy-chain of mines that had been laid by British soldiers guarding access to the town and the bridge across the Meuse.

ALSO IN DINANT

- **The Citadel**, located on a rocky outcrop and accessible both by steps and cable-car, with its spectacular panorama over the Meuse valley. Nearby is a French Military Cemetery from WW1 which also contains Commonwealth War Graves of 25 Allied airmen who were shot down or crashed during WW2 missions.
- The **'Caves of Han'** and their beautiful underground formations
- **Lefebvre beer Museum**. One of Belgium's famous abbey beers was first brewed in 1240. The museum, in a former convent, charts Lefebvre's remarkable history and offers tastings of its nine modern varieties.

3 Celles

On 24 December at the Celles crossroads, the lead tank of an armoured column of 2. Panzer struck a mine and was immobilised. Believing that all roads towards Dinant were mined, the commander of the column decided to move his tanks across country, but lack of fuel and ammunition curtailed the advance. Then the column was spotted and trapped in a pincer movement by the British 3rd Royal Tank Regiment and a unit of the US 2nd Armored Division, with Allied fighter bombers in support.

The day after Christmas, the German armoured column was annihilated and the 'German Pocket' of Celles – Foy – Notre Dame captured. The planned breakthrough of the 5th Panzer Army had been thwarted. The Germans would not cross the River Meuse and would never reach Antwerp and its crucial port facilities.

4 Rochefort

On 23 December 1944, the vanguard of Panzer 'Lehr' clashed with the 335th Infantry Regiment of the 84th US Infantry Division. The besieged Americans received the order to withdraw and succeeded in breaking through the encircling forces.

On 3 January 1945, paratroopers of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion of the 6th British Airborne Division entered the town, cleaning out pockets of German resistance.

They also carried out reconnaissance patrols around Rochefort, positioned an artillery battery atop the feudal castle, and then continued their advance towards Marche-en-Famenne.

ALSO IN ROCHEFORT

- Monument dedicated to the 335th Infantry Regiment of the 84th Infantry Division, **'The Rail-Splitters'**, which on 23 and 24 December bravely opposed the advance of the tanks of Panzer 'Lehr'. (Crossroads St Hubert – Dinant and Marche – Han)

5 Bure

At dawn on 3 January 1945, in the cold and snow, the 13th Battalion Parachute Regiment of the British 6th Airborne Division left Resteigne on foot and headed towards the occupied village of Bure. At 13:00, from the edge of the forest, the British launched their attack. As soon as the paras left the cover of the trees they came under heavy machine-gun and mortar fire as well as shells from a Panzer tank. Undaunted, they pressed on to the village, progressing from house to house. After three days of heavy fighting, sometimes hand-to-hand, and suffering heavy losses, the paratroopers gained control of the village.

On the same evening, the British paras received orders to leave the village and to continue their advance. They would also liberate Wavreille, Grupont, Jemelle, On, Hargimont, Nassogne, Amberloup, Ambly, Marloie, Waha and Roy.

ALSO IN BURE

- **'Roll of Honour'** of the British 6th Airborne Division. (Inside the church)
- **Stone to the civilian victims and all the soldiers** killed during the battle for Bure (Major Jack Watson MC Square)



6 Plaque reminding us that French paratroopers were the first to enter St. Hubert and established their command post in this house. (3, Place du Marché)

6 Saint Hubert

From 26 December 1944, a squadron of French SAS paratroopers attached to the British 6th Airborne Division was in action east of the town, protecting the flanks of the British paratroopers and establishing links with the 87th US Infantry Division by carrying out reconnaissance patrols. On 11 January 1945, ahead of the men of the 87th, a patrol of French SAS paratroopers entered the town, chasing out the last Germans and capturing 20 prisoners in the process. The paratroopers hoisted the French flag above the town hall and the local authorities gave them the keys to the town by way of gratitude.

ALSO IN SAINT HUBERT

- Plaque dedicated to the 87th US Infantry Division, **'The Golden Acorn'**, which liberated the town. (On the front of the Hôtel de Ville, Place du Marché)
- Plaque reminding us that the author and war correspondent **Ernest Hemingway** stayed in Saint Hubert in December 1944. (18, Place du Marché)
- Monument dedicated to the **Chasseurs Ardennais Regiment**, in particular for their Ardennes Campaign in May 1940. ('La Roseraie', Avenue des Chasseurs Ardennais).



8 Memorial with a list of victims of this terrible event. A visit of the basement to view the photos of each victim, and a moment of meditation, are recommended. (53, Nationale 4, 6951 Bande)

7 Barrière de Champlon

After advancing along the River Bronze, the Scots of the 5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders crossed Ronchamps and forced the Germans out of the village of Mièrchamps. Then they captured Journal and sent out reconnaissance patrols. Early in the morning of 14 January, one of these patrols famously linked up with the GIs of the 87th Infantry Division at the Barrière de Champlon crossroads.

ALSO IN BARRIÈRE DE CHAMPLON

- Plaque commemorating the meeting of a **Scottish patrol of the 5th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders and an American patrol of the 87th Infantry Division**. (Maison du ski in Champlon village)

8 Bande

On 11 January 1945, a patrol of Belgian SAS paratroopers entered the village of Bande and to their horror discovered the bodies of 34 civilians who had been shot in the back of the neck on Christmas Eve and dumped in the basement of a ruined house. The youngest of them was barely seventeen.

A few days later, the commander of the 9th Battalion Parachute Regiment of the 6th Airborne Division gave the unfortunate victims of the German Gestapo a decent burial with full military honours.



10 Hotton CWGC Cemetery

9 Marche-en-Famenne

On 21 December, the 84th US Infantry Division - including future Secretary of State Henry Kissinger - took up position between Marche and Hotton to prevent 116. Panzer from crossing the wooded ridge dominating the Famenne plain that leads to the River Meuse.

In a snowstorm on 4 January, the Welsh soldiers began their attacks in the Marche-Hotton area. Their advance was considerably slowed down by the wooded terrain cut by valleys as well as by the cold and snow, but despite the German artillery, minefields and roadblocks of felled trees, the Welshmen liberated the villages of Menil, Waharday, Rendeux and Grimbiémont.

After three days and nights of heavy fighting in the woods in freezing weather, the 53rd Welsh Division had lost 105 men before they were relieved by the 51st Highland Division.

ALSO IN MARCHE-EN-FAMENNE

- Plaque dedicated to the **84th US Infantry Division** reminding us that the town was never occupied thanks to General Alexander Bolling and the bravery of his men who stopped the advance of German troops (17, Rue du Commerce)

Musée Des Chasseurs Ardennais

Presenting the history of uniforms and military service as well as the battles of 1914-1918, the Second World War and the Resistance, and finally the period from 1946 to the present day. (See page 6 of May 1940 side)



10 Turret of a British 'Firefly' Sherman tank dedicated to the 53rd Welsh Division and supporting armoured units. (Rue de Haute)

10 Hotton

In early January 1945, it was from Hotton that several armoured and infantry units of the British 30e Corps launched the Allied counter-offensive towards La Roche-en-Ardenne, their objective being to push the Germans back, clean out the west bank of the Ourthe River sector, and link up with the American troops.

Commonwealth War Graves

The Cemetery is located at the southern end of the town on a wooded plateau, where 666 Commonwealth soldiers and airmen have been laid to rest, including a soldier of Belgian descent aged 18 who fought in the uniform of the 53rd Welsh Division. (Rue de la Liberation).

ALSO IN HOTTON

- Monument dedicated to the **Belgian Commandos** with a plaque commemorating the **Belgian SAS**. (Church square)
- Plaque dedicated to the **51st U.S. Engineer Combat Battalion**. (Bridge over the Ourthe River)
- Turret of a British 'Firefly' Sherman tank (see picture above)



11 'Roll of Honour' Memorial to the 51st Highland Division men. (Situating at the entrance of the town coming from Hotton)



11 British 'Achilles' Tank Destroyer 'Northampton' dedicated to the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry Regiment supporting the 51st Highland Division and which was the first tank to enter the town behind the 1st Black Watch. (Situating on the esplanade over looking the town)

11 La Roche-en-Ardenne

On the freezing morning of 7 January 1945, the 51st Highland Division left their standby positions to the south of Liège and headed for the front line between Marche and Hotton.

Their mission was to relieve the exhausted Welsh units and advance towards La Roche-en-Ardenne. After liberating the villages of Hodister, Warizy and Ronchampay on 11 January the 1st Battalion Black Watch pushed on the Ourthe River towards La Roche. Shortly before midday, preceded by a mine disposal team and armoured reconnaissance vehicles of the 2nd Derbyshire Yeomanry Regiment, the Scots entered the town that had been devastated by American bombing. They were followed by armoured vehicles of the 1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry Regiment.

When the town was liberated from its last German defenders and the main street was cleared of debris, the other units of the Division moved off in turn, crossing La Roche and advancing towards the villages of Hives, Hubermont, Miérchamps, Erneuville and Ortho, which they liberated, and linked up with the American troops.

The 'Battle Of The Ardennes' Museum

With a section dedicated to the British, it spreads over four floors. The dioramas and showcases display more than 100 mannequins of American, British and German soldiers with their equipment and weapons,

as well as uniforms donated by veterans who fought in the battle. Among them is the combat jacket of Lieutenant-Colonel Cathaert, commander of the 7th Battalion Black Watch of the 51st Highland Division, who helped liberate La Roche on 11 January 1945. The museum also displays personal objects found on the battlefield, light and heavy weapons, documents and photographs, and some military vehicles.

Visit the Weapons Room where some 90 rifles, pistols and revolvers are displayed, as well as one of the famous 'Enigma' cypher machines of Polish origin. www.batarden.be

ALSO IN LA ROCHE-EN-ARDENNE

- Commemorative plaque reminding us that on 12 January 1945, an armoured reconnaissance patrol attached to the **84th US Infantry Division** coming from the heights of Samrée linked up with the **Scots of the 51st Highland Division** coming from Hotton. (Near the bridge on the River Ourthe on the corner of Rue de la Gare and Rue de Cielles).
- **Sherman tank** dedicated to the American units that participated in the liberation of La Roche and the surrounding area. (Esplanade Quai de l'Ourthe)
- The ruins of a **9th century medieval castle** built on a rocky outcrop dominating the town.
- The quirky **ACHOUFFE Brewery**, whose most famous brew is La Chouffe, a crisp and fruity lager. Another favourite, is the Mc Chouffe, a dark beer similar in flavour to popular Scottish tipples. Hence its nickname: 'Scotch of the Ardennes'.

SECTOR 2

Bastogne

In their rest area near Reims in France on the evening of 18 December 1944, the paratroopers of the US 101st Airborne Division were put on a state of alert. Weather conditions ruled out an airborne drop, so they were rushed by road to the Ardennes battle zone to stop the advance of German troops towards Bastogne, and to defend the main routes leading to the town.

Meanwhile, units of the 5th Panzer Army, commanded by Field-Marshal Von Manteuffel, outflanked the town from the north and the south. Bastogne and its defenders found themselves surrounded. 2. Panzer, spearhead of the 5th Panzer Army, having been suddenly stopped on Christmas Eve in sight of Dinant, and taking the view that they could no longer cross the Meuse and that Antwerp could no longer be reached, was ordered by the German High Command to concentrate their main effort on the capture of Bastogne.

Coming from the south, an armoured column of the 4th US Armored Division of General Patton's 3rd Army decided to push ahead towards Bastogne, and on 26 December they broke through the German siege. In spite of heavy German artillery fire, little by little the American units managed to broaden the corridor through the German lines. The epic battle for Bastogne would last until 17 January 1945.

1 Bastogne

101st Airborne Museum

Bastogne's former military mess now is home to a museum dedicated to the Battle of the Ardennes/ Bulge. In addition to its fine collection, visitors can immerse themselves in a frightening World War 2 experience in the basement, where the sound and vibrations of a bombing raid have been realistically recreated. Many civilians sheltered from the bombs in their cellars, not knowing what devastation they'd find if and when they emerged.

www.101airbornemuseumbastogne.com



ALSO IN BASTOGNE

- Division Artillery Commander and Acting Division Commander of the 101st US Airborne Division, 'The Screaming Eagles', **Brigadier-General Anthony McAuliffe** commanded the successful defence of Bastogne, and on 22 December, when German emissaries demanded his surrender, he gave them his now famous reply of "Nuts". (Place McAuliffe).
- Commemorative plaques dedicated to the **4th, 10th and 11th US Armored Divisions**. (Place McAuliffe)
- Commemorative plaque dedicated to the **512th, 513th and 514th Fighter Squadrons of the 406th Fighter Group**. (Place McAuliffe)
- Commemorative plaque dedicated to **Renée Lemaire**, a Bastogne nurse who was killed during the shelling of the hospital established by the Americans in a large store. (Rue de Neufchâteau opposite the 'Au Pays d'Ardenne' museum)
- **Turrets of Sherman tanks** demarcating the defensive perimeter of the besieged town. (On the main roads into Bastogne).
- Plaque dedicated to **General McAuliffe** and his HQ (Caserne du 1A, Route de La Roche 40).



2 Mardasson Memorial



2 The 'Screaming Eagle' monument

2 Mardasson

Bastogne War Museum

An interactive and modern presentation of the Battle of the Bulge enables visitors to follow the story of four different characters, each presenting a different side of the war through their own eyes and stories: an American soldier, a German soldier, a school teacher in Bastogne and a child from Bastogne.

www.bastognenewarmuseum.be

Mardasson Memorial

Memorial built on Mardasson Hill on the initiative of the Belgian-American Association. Inaugurated on 16 July 1950, the memorial was designed by the architect Georges Dedoyard in the form of a star, representing the homage of the Belgian people to the 76,890 American soldiers killed, wounded or missing in action during the liberation of their towns and villages in the Battle of the Ardennes. At the centre of the memorial a stone bears the inscription in Latin: "The Belgian people remember their American liberators". It reminds us that on 4 July 1946, earth was taken from this spot in the presence of the US Ambassador and placed in an urn in a sealed casket. This was presented to US President Harry Truman by the Belgian authorities.

On the interior walls of the Memorial is inscribed the story of the Battle of the

Ardennes, and on the exterior columns the American units that participated in the battle are named alongside their unit insignia. On top of the Memorial, a promenade equipped with viewpoint indicators enables visitors to locate the site of the battle for Bastogne. At the foot of the Memorial, a crypt dug in the rock and decorated with mosaics by the French artist Fernand Leger houses three chapels: Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish.

Bastogne Barracks

The former US headquarters set up by legendary commander General McAuliffe in December 1944 is now a WW2 interpretation centre. There are exhibitions, reconstructions and a fine collection of military vehicles of the period, including a Tiger and a Sherman tank. Opening times are restricted. Check www.bastogne-barracks.be for details.

ALSO IN MARDASSON

- The **'Screaming Eagle'** monument dedicated to the 101st US Airborne Division besieged in Bastogne (between the Bastogne War Museum and the Mardasson Memorial)
- A slab dedicated to the men who fought in the **E 'Easy' Company/506th Parachute Infantry Regiment/101st US Airborne Division**, as seen in Spielberg's epic TV drama 'Band of Brothers' (Route Bizory – Foy)
- The **'Fox Holes'** dug out and used by members of the E 'Easy' Company, still visible today (Bois Jacques, route de Bizory – Foy)



4 Destruction in Noville

3 Recogne

After the Battle of the Ardennes, on 4 February 1945 this locality was chosen as the resting place for American as well as German soldiers. However, in 1947 the remains of American soldiers were either repatriated to the United States or transferred to the newly established American military cemeteries at Henri-Chapelle and Neuville-en-Condroz. The remains of German soldiers were gathered together in Recogne.

German Military Cemetery

This cemetery is distinguished by a chapel built from pink Eifel sandstone, its internal walls built of slate. It contains the remains of 6,807 German soldiers, the youngest of whom was barely 17 years of age and the eldest 52.



4 German Military Cemetery in Recogne

4 Noville

On 18 December and throughout the next two days, armoured vehicles of the combat team commanded by Major William Desobry, and the para battalion of Lieutenant-Colonel La Prade, slowed the advance of 2. Panzer and of 26. Volksgrenadier. Seriously wounded, Major Desobry was evacuated and then taken prisoner by the Germans. Lt-Colonel La Prade was killed during the fighting. The American troops eventually withdrew towards Bastogne and the Germans occupied the village for more than a month.

ALSO IN NOVILLE

- **'Enclos des Fusillés'** in memory of the seven civilian hostages killed by the Gestapo on 21 December after a long and painful interrogation.

5 Mageret

Arriving in the village on 19 December at 02:00, the vanguard of Panzer 'Lehr' under the command of General Bayerlein attacked the roadblocks set-up by Combat Team Cherry. After fierce fighting, fifteen German tanks were destroyed but the Americans also lost many armoured vehicles.

Although its advance was slowed down, Panzer 'Lehr' did not exploit its advantage to advance towards Bastogne, thus allowing the Americans to strengthen the town defences. The village remained occupied by German troops until 13 January 1945.

6 Neffe

Positioned in the village since 18 December, the armoured vehicles of Combat Team Cherry would oppose the advance of Panzer 'Lehr'. However, after heavy combat, the Americans withdrew and abandoned the village, which would eventually be liberated on 1 January 1945.

7 Marvie

On 20 December, Panzer 'Lehr' maintained its siege of Bastogne, attacked the American paratroopers and armoured vehicles of Combat Team O'Hara, and tried several times to capture the burning village, which they eventually succeeded in occupying. The village was finally liberated on 9 January 1945. Meanwhile, the civilian population had paid a heavy price in both loss of life and destruction of their homes.

The Stones of 'The Liberty Way'

In August 1946, at St. Symphorien to the south of Paris and halfway between Normandy and Bastogne, the first stone of 'The Liberty Way' was unveiled. It was the idea of Major Guy de la Vasselais, Head of the French Military Mission to General Patton's 3rd Army. Wishing to commemorate the liberation with an imposing monument, Major Guy de la Vasselais suggested placing a symbolic stone every kilometre along the route followed by the divisions of General Patton's 3rd Army. 'The Liberty Way' runs along the 1,145 kilometres (712 miles) of the advance of Patton's troops, and the same number of stones therefore stretch from the landing beaches in Normandy to the Mardasson Memorial in Bastogne, passing through Avranches, Le Mans, Fontainebleau, Reims, Verdun, Metz, Luxembourg and Arlon. Each stone bears a flaming torch rising from the ocean, a replica of the one held by the Statue of Liberty at the entrance to the port of New York.



(c) MT Pays de Bastogne - Francine SCHMITZ

8 Villers-La-Bonne-Eau

Occupied since 19 December by German paratroopers, the village came under fire from American artillery. The Germans and the Americans both wanted to capture the village to take control of the important Arlon-Bastogne highway. For days they clashed in heavy fighting. Under pressure from the 35th US Infantry Division and the 4th US Armoured Division of Patton's 3rd Army, the Germans withdrew and the village was finally liberated on 10 January 1945.

ALSO IN **VILLERS-LA-BONNE-EAU**

- Plaque dedicated to the **35th US Infantry Division**, 'Santa Fe' (on the Belgian 'Devezé' pillbox).

9 Assenois

On the Moselle front, as General Patton's 3rd Army prepared to launch a major attack on the defences of the Siegfried Line, on 19 December 1944 the American High Command ordered him to make a 90-degree turn and move his divisions towards Bastogne. But unfavourable weather conditions, the state of the roads, and harassing fire from German units made the going rough for General Patton's troops. The men were frozen and exhausted. It wasn't until the 23 and 24 December that the skies cleared, enabling the Allies to air-drop essential supplies to those besieged in Bastogne, and also facilitated the advance of Patton's troops. In the afternoon of 26 December, on Patton's order, the 37th Tank Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Boggess pushed on towards Assenois and succeeded in breaking the German cordon around Bastogne, linking up with the 326th Engineer Combat Battalion of the 101st Airborne. A column of ambulances immediately exploited the 'Assenois corridor' to Bastogne before returning with the wounded to evacuate them to field hospitals. In the following days, the American troops made every effort to maintain and broaden the corridor despite numerous German attempts to close the breach.

ALSO IN **ASSENOIS**

- A Belgian army pillbox, part of the defensive constructions of 1935 bears a plaque commemorating the link-up of the troops of the **4th Armored Division** with the besieged paratroopers of the **101st Airborne Division**, as well as a plaque dedicated to **Lieutenant Charles Boggess** (Route d'Assenois).

10 Senonchamps

On the first day of the Battle of the Ardennes, the Americans deployed three battalions of field artillery around the outskirts of the village. On 21 December, the American units were attacked but, with the aid of reinforcements, repelled the German assault. Over the course of the following days the American troops finally found themselves in the siege zone and abandoned their positions. Nonetheless, on 2 January 1945, they would reoccupy the village.

11 Hemroulle

On 22 December, following a heavy snowfall, Major John D. Hanlon, commanding the 1st Battalion of the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, asked the villagers for white sheets to camouflage his men

and vehicles. After the war, in February 1948, the Major returned to the village to officially present replacement sheets to the population from the people of his home town of Winchester, Virginia. During a remembrance ceremony, he was made an honorary citizen by the local authorities. The village of Hemroulle was never occupied by German troops.

ALSO IN **HEMROULLE**

- Plaque dedicated to the **463rd Parachute Field Artillery Battalion** of the 101st Airborne Division and to **the inhabitants of Hemroulle**.

12 Champs

Defended by the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101st Airborne, on Christmas night the village was attacked by 15. Panzergrenadier whose objective was to capture Bastogne. The German armoured vehicles were destroyed and hand-to-hand fighting continued in the village.

After the fighting, the inhabitants discovered a message written in chalk on the blackboard of the village school by a German officer:

"May the world never again experience another Christmas night like this! To die in combat far from one's children, one's wife and one's mother, there is no greater cruelty.

To take a son from his mother, a husband from his wife, a father from his children – is this worthy of a human being?

Life can only be given and accepted so that we can love and respect each other.

It is from ruins, blood and death that universal brotherhood will undoubtedly be born."

13 Longchamps

In the 101st Airborne Division's defence plan for the town, this village would be turned over to the 502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment and the zone was expected to remain calm for a long time. However, on 3 January 1945 and for several days thereafter, the American paratroopers would have to face the tanks of 9. Panzer attempting to break through their lines. Despite heavy losses, the GIs resisted stoutly. On 12 January, the American paratroopers who had nicknamed the area 'Misery Wood' were at last relieved by an armoured unit.

ALSO IN **LONGCHAMPS**

- Stone dedicated to the **502nd Parachute Infantry Regiment** of the 101st Airborne Division. (Towards Compogne)

SECTOR 3

The Breakthrough of the 6th Panzer Army

Composed of Waffen SS divisions, feared for their fanaticism and savagery, the 6th Panzer Army, commanded by Field-Marshal Sepp Dietrich, received the order to cross the River Meuse between Huy and Liège, using the five routes which had been assigned to him in a sector of the Ardennes ill-suited to the movement of armoured columns.

The initial breakthrough was to be carried out by 12th SS Panzer as well as 11th SS Panzer, with its spearhead, the Kampfgruppe (Task Force) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Peiper, former adjutant to Heinrich Himmler in the Russian campaign. It would then be the task of 2. And 9. SS Panzer to exploit the breakthrough, and to push on towards Antwerp and capture its port installations.

Although they were initially surprised by the offensive, the American units reacted vigorously to restore their lines of defence, stopped the advance of the German columns, and critically delayed their armoured units.

During his advance, Peiper became notorious for numerous massacres of civilians and American prisoners. The task force was finally stopped at La Gleize. The advance of the 12th, 2nd and 9th SS Panzer was also stopped. The breakthrough of the German 6th Panzer Army was brought to a halt.

Believing that the 6th Panzer Army would never reach the Meuse, the German High Command decided to withdraw it from the combat zones and ordered it to move to the eastern front to resist the Russian advance towards Germany.

1 Henri-Chapelle

Provisionally laid out in September 1944 by the 1st Infantry Division, the American Military Cemetery was completed in 1960 and inaugurated on 9 July of that year. Some 7,992 American soldiers are buried here, many of them killed during the Battle of the Ardennes and in the fighting in Germany in the autumn and winter of 1944. The remains of many shot down American airmen lie alongside them.



The most important US military cemetery in Belgium majestically dominates the Herve plateau and the Berwinne valley. The entrance to the cemetery comprises two buildings linked by columns on which are engraved the names of 450 soldiers listed as missing in action or unidentified. The building to the right houses a chapel while that to the left presents the military operations in the form of large wall maps. Facing the graves and sculpted by Donald Hord of San Diego, California is a bronze statue of an archangel offering a laurel branch to the heroes.

(Rue du Mémorial, 4852 Hombourg)

Remember Museum 39-45

Housed in an old renovated barn, it displays mainly items abandoned by the 110 American soldiers from the First Infantry Division who once enjoyed 'R & R' at the Schmetzs' farm. Every item, diorama, display and flag has a connection to real stories that the owner is keen to share. Visits by appointment only. Watch the video on the museum's homepage www.remembermuseum.be

ALSO IN HENRI-CHAPELLE

- Dedicated to the **US 1st Infantry Division**, 'The Big Red One', which liberated the region in September 1944 and participated in the Battle of the Ardennes. (Route Henri Chapelle - Battice).



1 US Military Cemetery in Henri-Chapelle
© WBT - Morgane Vander Linden

2 Eupen

Close to the Hautes Fagnes and the Hürtgen Forest, Eupen assumed a strategic importance, lying on the main route for moving reinforcements to the combat zone. The town suffered intensive aerial and artillery bombardment.

ALSO IN EUPEN

- 'The Big Red One' is dedicated to the 1st Infantry Division. (Klotzerbahn)

3 Elsenborn

While preparing to launch a major attack to capture the River Roer dams to the north-west of Monschau, on 16 December the 2nd US Infantry Division was surprised by the German offensive and forced to take up defensive positions. During the first days of the Battle of the Ardennes, Elsenborn Ridge, where major American artillery positions were concentrated, would symbolise the valour and resistance of the American units preventing the German 6th Panzer Army from advancing towards the bridges over the River Meuse. The American High Command later acknowledged that the Battle of the Ardennes was largely won on these first few days on the heights of Elsenborn Ridge.



4 Memorial dedicated to the fighters of the 99th Infantry Division, 'The Checkerboard', for their valiant defence of the northern sector of the salient. (Near the church in Krinkelt)

4 Krinkelt – Rocherath

Also called 'The Twin Villages', Krinkelt and Rocherath were defended on an extended front by the 99th Infantry Division. The 99th had recently moved into Europe and was positioned there to gain limited combat experience, but would suffer fierce attacks by the battle-hardened troops of the German 6th Panzer Army. On 16 December the rookies of the 99th, nicknamed 'The Battle Babies', stopped the German units and slowed their advance towards the River Meuse. Nonetheless, on 19 December, they abandoned the twin villages and occupied new defensive positions around Wirtzfeld and atop the Elsenborn Ridge.

ALSO IN KRINKELT – ROCHERATH

- Memorial in homage to the **2nd US Infantry Division**, 'The Indian Head', which fought in the sector. (Near the church in Krinkelt, beside the monument to the 99th Infantry Division)



7 Memorial erected to the memory of 84 American prisoners of war murdered on 17 December by the men of the Kampfgruppe of Lt-Colonel Peiper. (Baugnez crossroads)

5 Büllingen

During the first few hours of the offensive, his way blocked by traffic jams caused by convoys of tanks and military vehicles, Lt-Colonel Peiper decided to deviate from his assigned itinerary and use routes allocated to other units of the 6th Panzer Army. He gave orders to pass through Büllingen to capture an American fuel depot and refuel his vehicles, which was done by American prisoners of war.

ALSO IN BÜLLINGEN

- Memorial erected to the memory of the valiant fighters of the **1st Infantry Division ('The Big Red One')** who for one month prevented the troops of the German 6th Panzer Army from continuing their advance towards the bridges of the River Meuse. They later took part in the recapture of the area. (Schwarzenbach, on the roundabout leaving Büllingen towards Bütgenbach)

6 Bütgenbach

During two days of unremitting combat between 18 and 20 December, a unit of the 1st Infantry Division, supported by armoured vehicles, repelled repeated attacks by the 12th SS Panzer of the 6th Panzer Army, causing them heavy losses in men and materiel.

7 Baugnez

Upon learning that an American anti-aircraft artillery brigade had established its HQ in Ligneuville, Lt-Colonel Peiper decided to advance to the village to capture the headquarters. On 17 December, at the Baugnez crossroads, an American convoy coming from Malmedy and heading for Sankt Vith was attacked by the vanguard of the Kampfgruppe Peiper. After a brief but violent encounter, the Americans' situation was hopeless. With dead bodies lying scattered on the ground, a few men managed to escape, but the majority were taken prisoner and assembled in a meadow alongside the road.

Baugnez 44 Historical Center

A memorial to the daily life of soldiers displaying American and German military equipment found on the battlefield. The tour concludes with a film about the 'Baugnez massacre' of 17 December 1944. www.baugnez44.be



8 Ligneuville Monument dedicated to the eight American prisoners of the 9th Armored Division murdered near the hotel by the vanguard of the Kampfgruppe Peiper.

8 Ligneuville

Surprised by the sudden arrival of Peiper's armoured spearhead, American officers billeted in the Hôtel du Moulin abandoned their meal and managed to escape. Nevertheless, three German tanks were knocked out by tanks of the 9th Armored Division. The SS were furious and in reprisal shot eight American soldiers.

ALSO IN LIGNEUVILLE

- Dedicated to the **eight American prisoners of the 9th Armored Division** murdered near the hotel by the vanguard of the Kampfgruppe Peiper. (Adjacent to the Hôtel du Moulin).

9 Sankt Vith

The capture of this town was vital for the German Army. But the numerous civilian refugees fleeing from the combat zone, and the major traffic jams caused by the convoys of German military vehicles, would considerably delay their advance.

On 18 December, the 7th US Armored Division stationed in the Netherlands was rushed towards the combat zone and became directly engaged in the defence of Sankt Vith and its approaches. Its headquarters was established in Vielsalm. According to the plans of the German High Command, Sankt Vith with its important road and rail centre should have been captured by the evening of 17 December. But the tenacious defence



9 Stone dedicated to the 106th US Infantry Division, 'The Golden Lions', who fought in the Schnee Eifel and two regiments who were captured. (Kloosterstrasse, next to the school)

of the American troops would delay the Germans for five days, and eventually they decided to bypass the town and continue their advance. The town was becoming an 'American salient', and taking the view that Sankt Vith would become indefensible and could be surrounded, on 22 December Field-Marshal Montgomery ordered a withdrawal of the troops to new defensive positions on the west bank of the River Salm. This was against the wishes of the American High Command. Under a deluge of fire, the 20,000 defenders managed to evacuate the town, which was immediately occupied by German troops. But on 24, 25 and 26 December, the Allies reduced Sankt Vith to a state of ruins by a series of massive aerial bombardments. Finally, on 23 January 1945, Sankt Vith was recaptured by the 7th US Armoured Division that had been obliged to abandon it a month earlier.

ALSO IN SANKT VITH

- To the 2nd US Infantry Division, '**The Indian Head**'. (Malmedyer Strasse)
- Homage to the **civilian victims** of the Allied bombing of the town. (Malmedyer Strasse)
- Plaque dedicated to the **7th Armored Division**. (Wall of the Hôtel de Ville)
- Monument dedicated to the **168th Engineer Combat Battalion** referring to its Presidential Military Citation and a Belgian 'Croix de Guerre' awarded for bravery by Prince Regent Charles. (Bois du Prümerberg, towards Schonberg-Schlierbach)



11 Sherman tank symbolising the strong resistance by 7th Armoured Division and its attached units which halted the advance of the 6th German Panzer Army, thus enabling the preparation of the Allied counter-offensive. (Rue Hermamont)

10 Poteau

Located not only on the main supply route (Sankt Vith - Vielsalm - La Baraque de Fraiture) of the 7th Armored Division, Poteau also lay on one of the attack routes of the 6th Panzer Army and was thus a vital strategic crossroads. On 18 December and for one week thereafter, fierce fighting took place between the US 14th Cavalry Group and units of the 1st SS Panzer and later the 9th SS Panzer. The crossroads was taken and retaken several times by both sides. On Christmas Eve the Americans received an order to abandon the crossroads and withdrew towards Vielsalm. Nevertheless, the advance of 1st SS Panzer of the German 6th Panzer Army had been greatly delayed. The crossroads was nicknamed 'Dante's Inferno' by the fighters. It also featured in a German propaganda film.

11 Vielsalm

It was in Vielsalm on 17 December that Major-General Robert Hasbrouck, commanding the 7th Armored Division, established his headquarters from which he directed the units that were to fight so bravely in the Vielsalm - Sankt Vith - Gouvy sector. Although outnumbered, they significantly delayed the advance Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army, but following Field-Marshal Montgomery's order to withdraw, General Hasbrouck left his Vielsalm headquarters on 23 December.



12 Plaque dedicated to the soldiers of the 291st Infantry Regiment of the 75th Infantry Division, and to the civilians killed during the Battle of the Ardennes. (On the church wall)

Bulge Relics Museum

Occupying a historic building in Joubiéval, the museum displays battlefield relics from Viesalm, Lierneux and the Baraque de Fraiture crossroads. Good collection of pictures, displays and vehicles. Check the museum website for details of opening hours. www.bulge-relics-museum.be

ALSO IN VIELSALM

- **Sherman tank** symbolising the strong resistance by 7th Armoured Division and its attached units which halted the advance of the 6th German Panzer Army, thus enabling the preparation of the Allied counter-offensive. (Rue Hermamont)
- Memorial dedicated to the **Resistance fighters of the Secret Army**. (Rue Hôtel de Ville)
- Monument dedicated to the **"Chasseurs Ardennais Regiment"**. (Rue Hôtel de Ville)

12 Grand Halleux

Having received the order to relieve the 82nd US Airborne, the 75th US Infantry took position along the River Salm, and at dawn on 15 January 1945, the men of 291st US Infantry Regiment left Grand Halleux to make attacks in the surrounding hills.



13 Monument dedicated to the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion that victoriously opposed the advance of the German tanks.

13 Neufmoulin

Kampfgruppe Peiper, in its rush to reach the River Meuse from La Gleize, was in desperate need of bridging sites to cross the Rivers Amblève and Lienne. However, the men of the 291st Engineer Combat Battalion stopped dead the lightning advance of the spearhead of the 6th Panzer Army, by blowing up a bridge over the Lienne when the German tanks were only a few metres short of it, obliging the Kampfgruppe to withdraw to La Gleize and take a new route towards the Meuse.

ALSO IN NEUFMOULIN

- Plaque recalling the bravery of the GIs of the **30th Infantry Division, 'Old Hickory'**. (Maison Lambotte)

14 Trois-Ponts

On 18 December 1944, coming from Stavelot, Peiper's vanguard decided to push towards Trois-Ponts and Werbomont and continue towards the bridges over the Meuse. But as the German tanks approached, men from the US 51st Engineer Combat Battalion blew up the bridges over the Amblève, thus obliging the armoured column to change its itinerary and to head for La Gleize and Cheneux, in order to exit the narrow valley of the Amblève. Furious, the SS men killed civilians in reprisal. Meanwhile, paratroopers of the 82nd US



14 Monument dedicated to the civilians murdered by the SS in reprisals. (At the side of the bridge over the Amblève).

Airborne Division, rushed by road from their rest area near Reims, arrived at Werbomont, their assembly area. Given the mission of covering the valley of the Salm, the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment occupied a defensive line Trois-Ponts - Basse - Bodeux and, at the price of heavy losses, halted the German advance.

ALSO IN TROIS-PONTS

- Monument dedicated to the **civilians murdered by the SS in reprisals**. (At the side of the bridge over the Amblève).
- Plaque dedicated to the **US 51st Engineer Combat Battalion** which stopped the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper by blowing-up the bridges over the Amblève and the Salm, and successfully defended its positions until relieved by the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division. (On the Amblève bridge, on the road from Stavelot to Trois-Ponts)
- Monument dedicated to the **12 soldiers from Company A and three local civilians**. On the morning of 17 December, elements of Gruppe Peiper (1st SS Panzer Division) entered Ligneuville and captured Company A's Kitchen crew and its Supply crew. They were transported to the south of Stavelot at Vaulx-Richard and murdered there.



15 A 69-ton Royal Tiger tank reminding us that Kampfgruppe Peiper, spearhead of the 6th Panzer Army, was stopped at La Gleize and never reached the Meuse. At the end of the war, like all military vehicles remaining in combat zones, a scrap metal company should have recovered the tank abandoned by Peiper, but it became the subject of a deal. In exchange for a bottle of brandy the 'Royal Tiger' would remain in La Gleize permanently. © December 44 Museum

15 La Gleize

On 18 December, the vanguard of Kampfgruppe Peiper passed through La Gleize and decided to head for Cheneux to reach Werbomont and then the River Meuse. But the bridge over the Lienne at Neufmoulin had just been destroyed, so Peiper was forced to withdraw to La Gleize and occupy defensive positions in the woods. During the night of 22 to 23 December, the Luftwaffe tried to resupply Kampfgruppe Peiper, but the majority of the parachute containers dropped outside the German defensive perimeter. Cut off from their rear base and after heavy fighting to disengage, the 800 survivors destroyed their vehicles, crossed the Amblève and the Salm, and on foot rejoined their unit, the 1st SS Panzer, in Wanne. The escapees were later re-equipped, and on 30 December took part in the fighting to retake the 'Assenois corridor' south of Bastogne.

December '44 Historical Museum

A museum with dioramas displaying the advance of the 1st SS Panzer and its Kampfgruppe commanded by Lt-Colonel Peiper, as well as the American units that halted the German tanks. Not forgetting a large collection of military insignia, maps of the advance of the troops, a model of La Gleize during the battle, and photographs taken at the time. Don't miss the wire-guided German 'Goliath', a tracked explosive charge guided by cable towards the enemy lines. The visit finishes with a film based on contemporary archive footage. www.december44.com

ALSO IN LA GLEIZE

- Plaque dedicated to the **3rd US Armored Division, 'Spearhead'**. (In the Museum)
- Plaque dedicated to the **80th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion**. (In the Museum)
- Plaque dedicated to the **505th Parachute Infantry Regiment and the 82nd US Airborne Division, 'All American'**. (In the Museum)
- Plaque dedicated to the **740th Tank Battalion**. (In the Museum)



SECTOR 4

The Stopping of the 6th and 5th German Panzer Armies

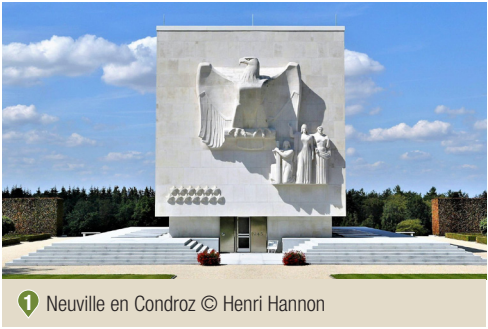
In its attempt to exploit the effects of surprise and to ensure a rapid advance of its armoured troops, the German High Command had planned to capture the important routes and crossroads during the first days of its offensive. Surprised and harassed by the powerful assaults of the German tanks, the American units were forced to withdraw. But they reorganised rapidly and took up more favourable defensive positions, and with the help of reinforcements and the power of their artillery, they managed to slow the advance of the German columns.

In the 6th Panzer Army sector, following a badly-executed airborne operation when his paratroopers landed outside the dropping-zone, Colonel Von der Heydte's group proved ineffective. Also, the Skorzeny Brigade, equipped with vehicles and uniforms captured from the Americans, failed in their mission to capture the bridges over the River Meuse. 1. SS Panzer was stopped at La Gleize, 12. SS Panzer failed to cross the Elsenborn Ridge, and 2. and 9. SS Panzer got no further than the Manhay sector. So for the 6th Panzer Army, all hope of crossing the Meuse evaporated. The German High Command then decided that the main thrust would have to come from the 5th Panzer Army. The change of tactics didn't work. Having bypassed Bastogne, 2. Panzer was annihilated within sight of Dinant. 116. Panzer was stopped in the Marche-en-Famenne sector, and Panzer 'Lehr' got no further than the Rochefort area. Believing that the Meuse would never be crossed and the port of Antwerp lay beyond their reach, the

German High Command decided to limit its offensive to the symbolic capture of Bastogne. However, the audacity and determination of Patton and his troops would frustrate them.

1 Neuville-En-Condroz American Military Cemetery

US Military Cemetery inaugurated in 1960, where 5,328 soldiers are buried who died in the capture of Aachen in October 1944 and later during the Battle of the Ardennes. This imposing memorial is of rectangular shape with a majestic American eagle decorating the south face. The sides are engraved with the names of 462 soldiers missing in action or unidentified. The building houses a chapel and immense wall maps retracing military operations in Europe and the Ardennes. (Route du Condroz 164, 4121 Neupré)



1 Neuville en Condroz © Henri Hannon

2 Rabozee – Baillonville

On the evening of 22 December 1944, the 327th Field Artillery Battalion, positioned its batteries in this sector in support of units of the 84th Infantry Division in position between Marche and Hotton. Day and night the shells of these powerful 155 mm (6.1 inch) guns smashed into the German tanks of the 116. Panzer in the ‘Verdenne Pocket’.

ALSO IN **RABOZEE – BAILLONVILLE**

- Plaque dedicated to the 327th Field Artillery Battalion of the 84th Infantry Division, ‘**The Rail-Splitters**’. (Wall of the chapel, Rue de la Chapelle)

3 Marche-en-Famenne

See Sector 1, Page 11.

4 Verdenne

Stone dedicated to the 2,000 American and German casualties during the course of heavy fighting that took place between 23 and 26 December 1944. (Bourdon-Verdenne crossroads)

5 Hotton

See Sector 1, Page 11.

6 Melines – Soy

Having failed to cross the River Ourthe at Hotton, the 116. Panzer column turned around and



6 To the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment for its heroic defence. (Crossroads of routes Hotton - Soy and Ny- Melines)



5 Monument to the Belgian Commandos and SAS Paras.

returned to La Roche. Meanwhile, the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment, sent to reinforce the Quatre-Bras crossroads, harassed the advance of the German armoured column.

ALSO IN **MELINES – SOY**

- Monument dedicated to the **American crew of a tank** and the infantrymen who were riding on it, who died on 3 January 1945, the first day of the Allied counteroffensive. (Melines - Soy road)
- Monument dedicated to **Armoured, Infantry and Airborne units** who fought in the sector. (Melines - Soy road)
- Plaque dedicated to the **3rd Armoured Division**. (17, Rue du Grand Mont)



9 Panther tank of 2. SS Panzer, ‘Das Reich’, abandoned in the village when it ran out of fuel.

7 Sadzot

On the night of 27/28 December, using forest trails, a unit of 2. SS Panzer managed to break through the lines of defence of the 75th Infantry Division, entered the village and surprised the Americans. Paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division, supported by tanks of the 3rd Armoured Division, were sent as reinforcements. After savage fighting, the Germans withdrew leaving behind many dead. The village, with most of its houses destroyed, was once again occupied by the Americans.

ALSO IN **SADZOT**

- Stone dedicated to the **87th Mortar Battalion**, the **509th Parachute Infantry Regiment**, the **289th Infantry Regiment**, and the **3rd Armoured Division**. (At the end of the dead-end road)

8 Grandmenil

On Christmas night, tanks of 2. SS Panzer coming from La Baraque de Fraiture headed for the village and ran into a roadblock of American tanks. They eventually broke through, forcing the American tanks to withdraw. However, the village was retaken the following day by American troops.

ALSO IN **GRANDMENIL**

- Monument dedicated to the **75th Infantry Division** and the **3rd Armored Division**, ‘**Spearhead**’. (Erezée - Manhay crossroads)
- Plaque dedicated to the **238th Engineer Combat Battalion**. (Along the Grandmenil - Manhay road)



10 Plaque dedicated to the 509th Parachute Infantry Regiment, to the 83rd Infantry Division, and to the 3rd, 7th and 9th Armored Divisions who together opposed the advance of German armour and later liberated the village. (On the wall around the church)

9 Manhay

Heading towards Erezée and coming from Baraque Fraiture, at the entrance to the village the tanks of 2.SS Panzer ran into American tanks and paratroopers. After losing many tanks in the heavy fighting, the Americans abandoned Manhay and withdrew to Grandmenil. In the following days, at the cost of heavy losses, the Americans reoccupied Manhay.

Manhay History 44 Museum

Located next to a Panther tank, the museum vividly tells the story of the battle of Manhay from 23 December 1944 until the liberation of the last villages in January 1945. www.mhm44.be

ALSO IN **MANHAY**

- Stone dedicated to the men of the **325th Glider Infantry Regiment** of the 82nd US Airborne Division. (Opposite the Maison Communale)
- **German Pak 75 mm anti-tank gun**. (Opposite the Maison Communale)

10 Malempre

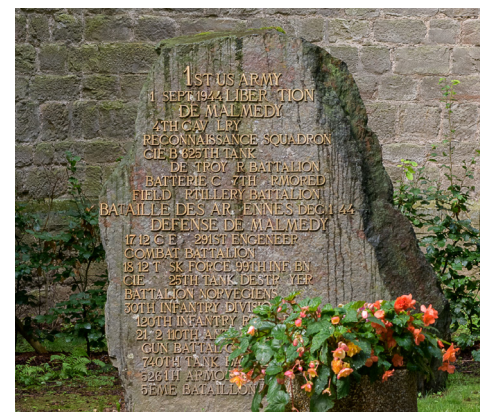
On the road from Trois-Ponts to Hotton that the German armoured columns wanted to use, this village was the scene of heavy fighting in the face of the advancing 2. SS Panzer, which occupied it on Christmas night. But in the first days of the Allied counter-offensive in January 1945, Malempre was liberated by American infantry and armoured units.



12 Monument in homage to the soldiers of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division.



13 Half-Track in homage to all the American units that fought in the defence and liberation of the town. (Place du 18 December, near the bridge)



14 Monument dedicated to the American units that liberated the town in September 1944 and those who fought against the Germans in December 1944. (To the left of the Cathedral)



16 Stone dedicated to the 82nd US Airborne Division, 'The All American', which left its assembly area in Werbomont to go into battle. (Place Capitaine Lespagnard)

11 Bra-sur-Lienne

In order to stabilise the front line in stronger positions, Field-Marshal Montgomery ordered the realignment of units of the 82nd Airborne Division on a line Trois-Ponts – Bra – Basse-Bodeux. This prompted Major-General James Gavin, commanding the Division, to say "Paratroopers have never executed an order to withdraw". However, they did withdraw.

ALSO IN BRA-SUR-LIENNE

- Plaque reminding us that **General Gavin**, commanding the **82nd US Airborne Division**, '**All American**', installed his headquarters from 22 to 24 December in Château Naveau.

12 Trois-Ponts

See Sector 3, Page 23.

ALSO IN TROIS-PONTS

- Monuments to the **505th Parachute Infantry Regiment**, the **51st Engineer Combat Battalion**, and to civilians.

13 Stavelot

In his quest for crossing points to exit the valley of the Amblève, Peiper decided to pass through Stavelot. Early on the morning of 18 December, the Germans neutralised the American guns defending the access to the bridge over the Amblève, crossed the bridge and entered the lower part of the town. However, on the night of 20/21 December, the Americans managed to blow up the bridge, cutting off the vanguard of Kampfgruppe Peiper from its rearguard and refuelling units, thereby forcing the Germans to change direction towards Trois-Ponts, where they would wreak vengeance by killing many civilians on their way.

In order to stop Peiper from capturing the enormous fuel depot, 6km-long (3.7 miles) on the Stavelot – Francorchamps road, soldiers of the 5th Belgian Fusilier Battalion guarding the depot set fire to the first rows of jerricans of fuel, creating a gigantic wall of flame.

ALSO IN STAVELOT

- Memorial dedicated to the **civilians murdered by the SS in December 1944**. (On the Trois-Ponts to Stavelot road, on the left at the entrance to the town)
- Stone dedicated to the **5th Belgian Fusilier Battalion**. (On the Stavelot to Francorchamps road, at the top of the rise on the left)
- Plaque erected on the initiative of C.R.I.B.A. in homage to the **30th Infantry Division**. (Site of the old abbey)

- Memorial in tribute to the **civilians** murdered by the Germans in 1944. (Site of the old abbey)
- Plaque dedicated to the **Allies** killed in the liberations of September 1944 and January 1945. (Site of the old abbey)
- Stone in memory of the **GIs of the 526th Armoured Infantry Battalion, 835th Tank Destroyer Battalion**, and the **291st Engineer Combat Battalion**. (Chemin du Château, on the right)
- National monument to the memory of the **Belgian mine-disposal units**. (Avenue des Démineurs, towards Malmédy).

- Remains of an **11th century church** in the grounds of the old abbey which contains the Spa Francorchamps Track museum, containing an illustrated history of one of the world's iconic racetracks. www.abbayedestavelot.be

14 Malmédy

No longer believing it possible to reach the bridges over the River Meuse, following a failed airborne operation on the night of 21 December, a Commando unit of the Brigade commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Skorzeny tried to enter Malmédy. But the commandos ran into stiff resistance from the American defenders of the 30th Infantry Division and a battalion of American soldiers of Norwegian origin. However, for reasons still unexplained, on 23, 24 and 25 December, Malmédy suffered intensive and devastating bombing by the American Air Force. Many civilians as well as American defenders of the town were killed.

ALSO IN MALMEDY

- Black marble stones dedicated to the **214 civilian victims** of the Allied bombing. (In the park to the left of the Cathedral)
- Monument dedicated to the **99th US Infantry Battalion**, 'Hansen's Norwegians', who were awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre for bravery. (Avenue de Norvège)

15 La Gleize

See Sector 3, Page 24.

16 Werbomont

In their rest area near Reims on evening of 17 December, paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division were put on alert. Weather conditions did not permit an airborne drop, so they sped towards Bastogne by road. On their way, however, they were ordered to continue to Werbomont, with the task of defending the valleys of the Rivers Amblève and Salm and to stop the advance of the German troops. During the night of 18 to 19 December, the paratroopers reached their assembly area in Werbomont, got down from their trucks and headed on foot towards Cheneux, Lierneux and Trois-Ponts to take up their defensive positions.

SECTOR 5

From Bastogne to Houffalize

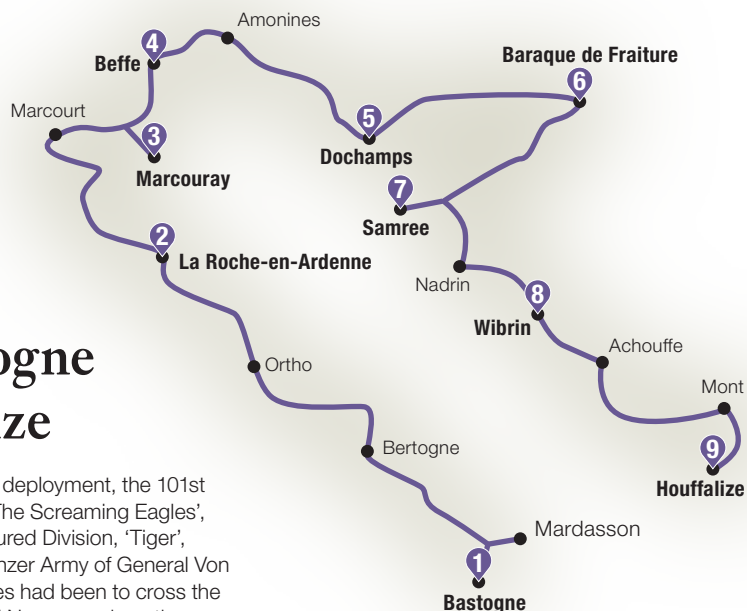
Thanks to their quick deployment, the 101st Airborne Division, 'The Screaming Eagles', and the 10th Armoured Division, 'Tiger', arrived ahead of the 5th Panzer Army of General Von Manteuffel, whose objectives had been to cross the Meuse between Dinant and Namur, and continue towards Brussels and then Antwerp in support of Sepp Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army.

Confronted by determined American resistance, the German units bypassed Bastogne and pressed on towards the River Meuse. The roads leading into Bastogne being cut, the town was finally surrounded. But the defenders held onto their positions until relieved by Patton's tanks.

In the course of a crisis meeting, General Eisenhower asked Patton to launch a counter-attack in the direction of Bastogne. Patton espoused the qualities of speed, efficiency and military tactics, and decided to withdraw several divisions from the Moselle front, including the 4th Armoured Division, to turn them 90 degrees and send them north towards Bastogne. But the advance was slow, hampered by heavy rain and snow, hard fighting and numerous losses. However, the day after Christmas, tanks of the 4th Armoured Division managed to break through the German lines and link up with the defenders of the town. The siege of Bastogne was broken. Patton's divisions continued their advance in the direction of Houffalize where, on 16 January 1945, they linked up with units of General Hodges' 1st US Army coming from the north, thereby capturing the German salient.

1 Bastogne

Sector 2, Pages 13 and 14.



2 La Roche-en-Ardenne

On 10 September 1944, the town celebrated its liberation by the American troops. But during their retreat, the Germans blew up both of the town bridges across the Ourthe River. One of the bridges was rebuilt by American engineers, and La Roche again became a strategic crossroads.

Believing the Houffalize sector to be strongly defended, on 20 December 116. Panzer moved towards La Roche. Considering the rebuilt bridge to be unreliable, they pressed on intending to cross the River Ourthe at Hotton. Confronted by heavy American fire, the German tanks turned around, returned to La Roche, and crossed the river on the Bailey bridge that the Americans had not had time to destroy during their withdrawal. On 26 and 27 December the American High Command decided to bomb La Roche and destroyed most of it. Some 114 civilian victims were found in the ruins. (Also see Sector 1, Page 12)

ALSO IN LA ROCHE-EN-ARDENNE

- Memorials to the **51st Highland Division**; the **1st Northamptonshire Yeomanry Tank Destroyer**; **Sherman tank**. (See Sector 1, Page 12)
- **Musée de la Bataille des Ardennes**. (See Sector 1, Page 12)



2 Detail from the plaque commemorating the link-up between an American patrol of the 84th Infantry Division and the Scots of the 51st Highland Division. (Corner of Rue de la Gare and Rue de Cielles)

3 Marcourt-Marcouray

Several days after the start of the Battle of the Ardennes, the 3rd Armored Division commanded by General Rose took position on a line of defence from Hotton to Manhay, with a mission to stop the advance of German troops and carry out reconnaissance operations. On 21 December, one of these reconnaissance forays, commanded by Colonel Sam Hogan and heading for La Roche, ran into the vanguard of 116. Panzer. Colonel Hogan's unit withdrew towards Marcourt and then Marcouray, where he found himself surrounded. Desperately short of fuel, the order to break out could not be executed, and the American attempts to disengage and recover parachuted supplies failed. On Christmas night, General Rose ordered Colonel Hogan to destroy his vehicles, cross the German lines and rejoin the American positions. After a 14-hour march, the 400 survivors reached the sentry posts of the 84th Infantry Division at Soy. They were quickly re-equipped and on 3 January 1945 took part in the counter-offensive.

ALSO IN MARCOURT-MARCOURAY

- Plaque dedicated to **Colonel Hogan** who had established his command post in the village (Junction of rue de la résistance and rue du Donneu)



4 Sherman tank dedicated to Colonel Hogan of the 3rd US Armoured Division, 'Spearhead', and to the 771st Tank Battalion. (Place de l'Église)

4 Beffe

Stopped within sight of the village of Beffe, which was occupied by a numerically superior German force, Task Force Hogan was forced to withdraw to better defensive positions in Marcouray where it was surrounded by German troops.

5 Dochamps

On 20 December, having suffered heavy losses and running short of ammunition, the Americans left the village, followed a few days later by the inhabitants. Dochamps was finally liberated on 7 January 1945, but upon returning home, the villagers found it looted and in ruins.

ALSO IN DOCHAMPS

- Stone dedicated to the **84th US Infantry Division**, 'The Rail-Splitters' and to the 2nd US Armoured Division, 'Hell on Wheels', who liberated Dochamps on 7 January 1945.



6 A 105 mm (4.1 inch) Howitzer, positioned here on the initiative of C.R.I.B.A (Centre for Research and Information on the Battle of the Ardennes)



9 Partly demolished Sherman tank in Wibrin

6 Baraque De Fraiture

Slowed down at the start of the offensive by military convoys and multiple traffic jams, 2. SS Panzer decided to change its itinerary and cross the Tailles plateau, passing through La Baraque de Fraiture crossroads. Conscious of the strategic importance of this crossroads of the Vielsalm - La Roche and Houffalize - Liège highways, on 19 December Major A. Parker resolved to prevent any advance by German troops. Three 105 mm (4.1 inch) Howitzer guns were positioned to guard the approach roads. On 23 December, after several days of heavy fighting and besieged by a larger German force, the American defenders were forced to abandon the crossroads. Some troops were captured; others managed to rejoin their units. Major Parker had been wounded and evacuated two days earlier. After capturing the crossroads, tanks of 2. SS Panzer continued their advance towards Malempré, Manhay and Grandmenil, where other American roadblocks awaited them.

7 Samree

At the start of the Battle of the Ardennes, the task of the 7th Armoured Division was to defend Sankt Vith, and the commander decided to set up a depot of foodstuffs, munitions and fuel at Samrée. But on the evening of 20 December, in its advance towards Hotton, 116. Panzer captured Samrée and the American re-supply depots.

ALSO IN SAMREE

- Plaque dedicated to the valiant fighters of the **82nd Armoured Reconnaissance Battalion** of the **2nd US Armoured Division 'Hell on Wheels'** who died liberating the village.

8 Wibrin

On Christmas Eve, three villagers were taken away by the Germans and shot by pistol at point-blank range. Their bodies were not found until April 1945.

9 Houffalize

Nestling in the narrow valley of the Ourthe River, Houffalize is a strategic stopping-point on the major highway from Bastogne to Liège. In May 1940, before withdrawing, the Belgian Chasseurs Ardennais had blown up the town's bridge in the face of advancing German troops. On the night of 19 December 1944, the bridge, by now rebuilt, enabled American paratroopers of the 82nd US Airborne Division, coming from Reims, to reach their assembly zone in Werbomont. They were followed, several hours later, by the vanguard of 116. Panzer, on its way towards the bridges over the River Meuse. Believing the sector to be strongly defended, the German commander changed his plans and headed towards La Roche. Several days later, in order to destroy the strategic crossroads that Houffalize represented, the American commander had the town bombed several times. The bodies of some 189 civilian victims were pulled from the ruins.

ALSO IN HOUFFALIZE

- **Panther Mark V tank of 116.** Panzer guarding the bridge and that had toppled into the River Ourthe, where it remained until the summer of 1945. (Place du Roi Albert)
- Memorial dedicated to the **civilian victims** of the town, which received the 'Croix de Guerre' with bar for exceptional courage during the bombing and the fighting for the liberation. (Near the church)



(c) Fédération Brigade Piron Geroft Bxls

The final days of the Battle of Ardennes

On 17 January 1945, having achieved all his objectives, Field-Marshal Montgomery withdrew the British 30e Corps from the Ardennes to deploy it in the Netherlands and prepare for a major airborne and ground operation into Germany with a crossing of the River Rhine. This was the long-planned 'Operation Varsity'.

The 1st US Army of General Hodges, temporarily integrated into the 21st Army Group commanded by Montgomery, returned under American command in the 12th Army Group of General Bradley.

On the German side, Dietrich's 6th Panzer Army left the Ardennes for the eastern front to resist the

progress of the Russian troops towards Germany.

By 28 January, the date generally reckoned to be the last day of the battle, the German Army had been pushed back to its starting positions of 16 December 1944. The Germans would never regain the initiative on the western front, and the occupation of Belgium was finally over after four long years. As the battlefront moved eastwards, a trail of grief and destruction was left behind, but the scarred and battered towns and villages of the Ardennes drew from their new-found freedom the determination to rebuild the ruins left by the war.

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