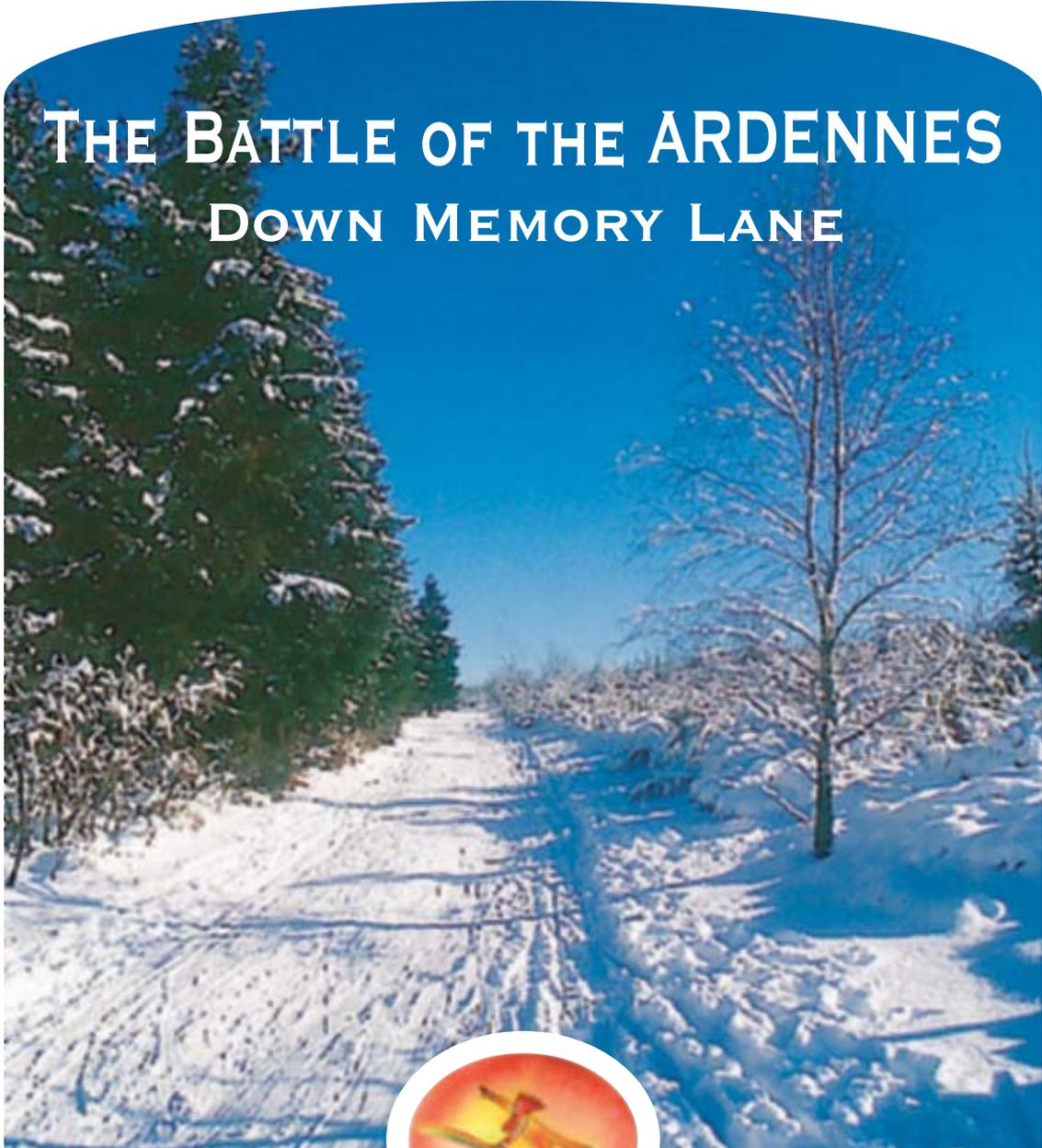


BELGIUM  
**WALLONIA**

**THE BATTLE OF THE ARDENNES  
DOWN MEMORY LANE**



**WALLONIA. ENJOY A WARM-HEARTED WELCOME.**

[www.wallonia-tourism.be](http://www.wallonia-tourism.be)





“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

“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 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group

## EDITORIAL

The ‘Battle of the Ardennes’ was the final confrontation of the Second World War that took place on Belgian soil between 16 December ’44 and 28 January ’45. Many lived through it, others have heard about it, but nobody today can remain indifferent about this decisive episode.

Every year, not only in Bastogne but also in La Roche-en-Ardenne, Hotton, Houffalize, Malmedy, Sankt Vith, Marche-en-Famenne, Vielsalm, or in Neuville-en-Condroz or Henri-Chapelle as well as in other places, villages and towns in Wallonia, we remember !

We remember with emotion, reverence and respect these soldiers who came from overseas to bring peace into our towns, villages and homes, and paid a very heavy price.

It is our wish to express our “duty of remembrance” through this brochure that will guide you from towns to villages, from memorial stones to monuments, from museums to sites or military cemeteries.

Also, it’s an opportunity to discover “down memory lane” the “present day” aspects of these regions of Wallonia, which, while not forgetting the “historical past”, offer you the most beautiful aspects of convivial tourism, in which the proximity and “the glow of living” punctuate our suggestions for relaxing or unusual discoveries.

Enjoy your visit !

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## HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The Allied landing in Normandy on 06 June 1944 was a psychological defeat for the German Army.

With a minimum loss of human life, within a few days the Allies had successfully achieved a massive landing of about 150,000 men.

Within a month after the landing almost a million Allied soldiers were fighting in Normandy. Then began the lightning breakthrough, first across France and then across Belgium.



*Marche – British 'Universal Carriers' rush to the combat zone. (US Army photo)*

In the centre was the 1<sup>st</sup> US Army of General HODGES, on his right the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army commanded by General PATTON, and on his left the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army headed by General DEMPSEY.

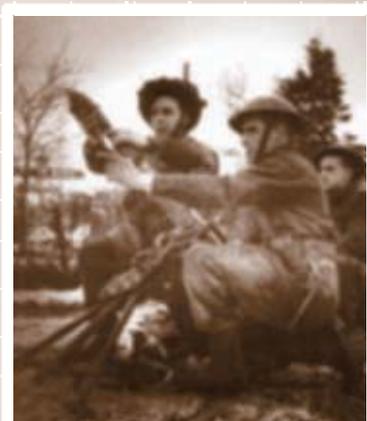
Paris was liberated at the end of August; Tournai, Brussels and Antwerp were liberated by British troops in early September; Mons, Namur, Liège and the Ardennes by American divisions during the month of September.



*Marche – Paras of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Battalion crossing the town. (US Army photo)*

After a hasty retreat, the German units established their defences behind the Siegfried Line. The 1<sup>st</sup> Army of HODGES succeeded in capturing Aachen, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army of PATTON prepared to invade the Saarland.

Between the two fronts, considering that the difficult terrain and the wintry conditions would dissuade the German Army from launching an attack in the Ardennes, General EISENHOWER, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), decided to “play for time” and to take the calculated risk of weakening the sector. Consequently, the Ardennes was considered as a sector to which the American divisions would go to re-form.



*Hamptean – 'Tommys' of the 1<sup>st</sup> Manchester Regiment. (Imperial War Museum photo)*

Meanwhile, the American President ROOSEVELT was thinking about the Yalta Conference with Stalin that, in February '45, would split Europe into two zones of influence. Moreover, differences of strategy existed between the American and British High Commands, EISENHOWER wishing to invade Germany from the whole length of the front line, and MONTGOMERY demanding a lightning breakthrough to Berlin from the Netherlands.



*Samrée – Sherman tank of the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Armored Division. (CEGES photo)*



*Dochamps – Slippery ground for the Sherman tanks of the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Armored Division. (US Army photo)*

The German High Command took advantage of this respite to draw up plans for a large-scale offensive.

These were to strike through the Ardennes, cross the River Meuse, re-take the city of Antwerp and its port infrastructure in order to prevent the transport of troop reinforcements and fresh supplies of fuel, munitions and food for the Allied armies, to isolate the British Army from the American Army, to force one or both to capitulate and thus obtain the signature of a separate peace on the western front. The German Army could then be transferred to the eastern front to halt the progression of the Russian Army.

However, the success of the offensive would depend on several factors : low and long-lasting cloud cover to prevent the intervention of Allied aircraft, a rapid initial

breakthrough with the capture of Allied fuel dumps, the control of important crossroads, and subsequently the widening of the breach.

According to the plans determined by the German High Command, the “main effort” of the offensive was to be ensured by the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army of Sepp DIETRICH that would have to cross the Elsenborn ridges and cross the River Meuse between Huy and Liège. The 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army commanded by General Baron Hasso VON MANTEUFFEL was given the tasks of capturing important crossroads at Sankt Vith and Bastogne, crossing the River Meuse between Dinant and Andenne, and advancing towards Antwerp via Brussels.



*Baromville – Sherman 'Firefly' tank of the British 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade. (Imperial War Museum photo)*

The northern flank of the offensive would be covered by the 15<sup>th</sup> Army of VON ZANGEN. On the southern flank the 7<sup>th</sup> Army of General BRANDENBERGER would have to face any possible counter-attack by General PATTON and his 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army.



*Hotton – The Gordon Highlanders moving into combat near La Roche. (New York Times photo)*

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 Otto SKORZENY, dressed in American uniforms and using captured GI equipment, who were to seize the bridges of Huy and Amay in order to ensure 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 (peat bogs in the Ardennes hills) and control the crossroads at Baraque Michel.

By night, observing radio silence, by road and rail, over days and even weeks, the German High Command brought in and deployed from Monschau to Echternach around 250,000 men and 600 tanks and assault guns, as well as 1,900 guns and howitzers.

After several successive postponements, it was finally on 16 December '44, at 05:30 in the morning, in the cold and fog, over a front of 125 km (78 miles), that the German offensive began, code-named 'Wacht am Rhein' (Rhine Guard) and which was later called the 'Battle of the Ardennes' or the 'Battle of the Ardennes'.



*Marche – Welsh column of the 160<sup>th</sup> Brigade moving into combat.  
(New York Times photo)*

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

So began the rush towards the River Meuse by the 6<sup>th</sup> Armoured Army of DIETRICH formed in particular by the 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer SS 'Leibstandarte Adolph Hitler', the 12<sup>th</sup> Panzer SS 'Hitler Jugend', the 2<sup>nd</sup> Panzer SS 'Das Reich', and the 9<sup>th</sup> Panzer SS 'Hohenstaufen', as well as the Volksgrenadier Division.

It was a total surprise for the Americans of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry of General

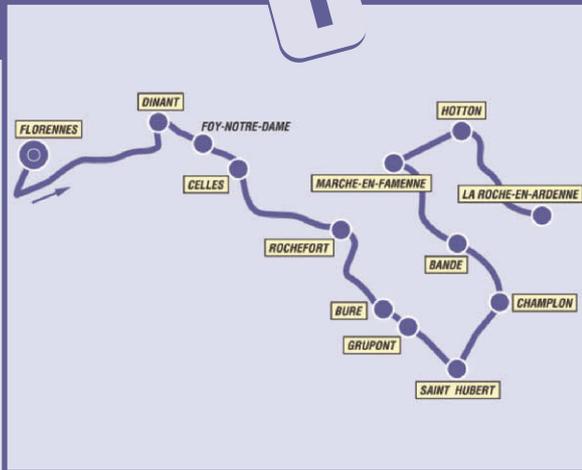
GEROW's V Corps and the 106<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry as well as units of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armoured of General MIDDLETON's VIII Corps, around 80,000 men. The units were shattered and defences penetrated at several points, but resistance was organized.

As regards the British troops based in the Netherlands, they were in training for their forthcoming campaigns on German soil, while already thinking about the approaching Christmas.

## LANE

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## THE BRITISH IN THE BATTLE



As admitted by the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, the participation of British troops in the 'Battle of the Ardennes' never reached the magnitude of that of the US Army. The British contribution, limited in numbers of men and time but stamped with the authority of its Commander-in-Chief, Field-Marshal Montgomery, was to prove efficient and cannot be underestimated.

On 20 December 1944, Montgomery ordered the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps, under the command of General Horrocks, to leave the Netherlands and move towards the combat zone of the Ardennes. By 22 December, the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division and the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division, as well as the Guards' Armoured Brigade, successively occupied defensive positions between Maastricht and Givet in order to oppose any attempt by German troops to cross the River Meuse. The British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, resting in Great Britain, was put on alert and received the order to move to the Ardennes.

On 3 January '45, in the cold and snow, in the Tellin-Rochefort-Hotton triangle, the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps launched its first attacks in the counter-offensive operation decided by the Allies. Successively, the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division and the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division, with their supporting armoured units, moved towards the front. The 43<sup>rd</sup> Wessex Division was held in reserve.

On 16 January, having achieved all his objectives, Field-Marshal Montgomery then decided to withdraw the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps units from the Battle of the Ardennes, and to send them to the Netherlands in order to prepare for the long-planned offensive into Germany and the crossing of the Rhine.

### FLORENNES

On 25 December '44, the 1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry armoured regiment arrived in Florennes, and for a couple of days were quartered in the Florennes aerodrome buildings before moving to the combat zone in support of units engaged in the counter-offensive.

Built in 1942 by the Luftwaffe and liberated in September '44 by American troops, the aerodrome would be used by the Fighter and Bomber Groups of the USAAF.

## SPITFIRE MEMORIAL MUSEUM



Located in the aerodrome buildings, the Museum displays a 1944 MK XIV Spitfire as well as the various types of aircraft that have figured prominently in the history of the Belgian Air Force.

In addition, 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.

Base J. Offenbergh, B-5620 FLORENNES –  
© 32 (0)71 68 25 14

## DINANT

During the evening of 23 December, at the foot of the Rocher Bayard, a jeep-load of Germans wearing American uniforms forced through a check-point and detonated a daisy-chain of mines, laid by a section of British soldiers guarding access to the town and the bridge across the River Meuse.



*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 Rocher Bayard)*

## WORTH SEEING

- The Dinant Citadel, located on a rocky outcrop and accessible both by steps and cable-car, with

its extraordinary panorama over the town and the valley of the Meuse.

B-5500 DINANT – © 32 (0)82 22 36 70 or 22 21 19

- ‘La Merveilleuse’ Grottos and the beauty of their concretion formations.

Route de Philippeville 142, B-5500 DINANT –  
© 32 (0)82 22 22 10

- Discovery boat-cruises on the River Meuse from Dinant to Anseremme and Hastière and even to Namur.

## CELLES

On 24 December at the Celles crossroads, the lead tank of an armoured column of 2. Panzer blew-up on a mine and was immobilized. Believing that all roads towards Dinant were mined, the commander of the column decided to move his tanks across country. However, the lack of fuel and ammunition prevented them from advancing and from taking effective action. In addition, the column was spotted and trapped in a pincer movement by tanks of the British 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Tank Regiment and a unit of the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division as well as by Allied fighter-bombers.

The day after Christmas, the German armoured column was annihilated and the German ‘Pocket of Celles – Foy – Notre Dame’ was captured. The breakthrough of the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army, commanded by General Hasso Von Manteuffel, had been defeated. The Germans would not cross the River Meuse and would never reach Antwerp and its port facilities.



*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)*

## WORTH SEEING

- The ancient Mosanne-style collegiate church, built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, with its 7<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century crypts.

## NEARBY

- At Celles-Houyet, the feudal castle of Vèves, witness of centuries past and fully-furnished. B-5561 CELLES-HOUYET – ☎ 32 (0)82 66 63 95
- At Foy-Notre-Dame, a Renaissance-style church, the ceiling of which consists of 145 caissons framing paintings on wood of the Rubens' school.

## ROCHEFORT

On 23 December '44, the vanguard of Panzer 'Lehr' clashed with the 335<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division. The besieged Americans received the order to withdraw and succeeded in breaking through the encircling forces.

On 3 January '45, paratroopers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Parachute Battalion of the 6<sup>th</sup> 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.



*Commemorative plaque dedicated to the Canadian paratroopers, reminding us that they liberated the town. (Square Crépin)*

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Monument dedicated to the 335<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 84<sup>th</sup> 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)
- Plaque for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994 of the Battle of the Ardennes. (Square Crépin)

## WORTH SEEING

- Count's castle of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, dominating the town with its imposing remains. Rue Jacquet, B-5580 ROCHEFORT – ☎ 32 (0)84 21 44 09
- Lorette Grotto and its marvellous sound and light show.
- Drève de Lorette, B-5580 ROCHEFORT – ☎ 32 (0)84 21 20 80  
Tourist train.

## BURE

At dawn on 3 January '45, in the cold and snow, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division left Resteigne on foot and headed towards the village of Bure, occupied by the Germans. At 13:00 hrs, from the edge of the forest overlooking the village, it began its attack. As soon as the paras left the cover of the trees they came under heavy German machine-gun and mortar fire as well as fire from a Panther tank. Despite all this, the British paratroopers continued their attack, reaching the first houses and progressing from house to house.

After 3 days of heavy fighting, sometimes hand-to-hand, and at the cost of heavy losses, the paratroopers gained control of the village. Bure was liberated. The same evening, the British paras received orders to leave the village and to continue their advance.

The paratroopers of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division would also liberate Wavreille, Grupont, Jemelle, On, Hargimont, Nassogne, Amberloup, Ambly, Marloie, Waha, Roy, etc.



Stone in the form of a headstone commemorating the 61 paratroopers who died in the liberation of Bure. (Church square)

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Plaque dedicated to the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. (Church precinct wall)
- Plaque reminding us that this house served as a medical dressing-station for British paratroopers. (Rue de Tellin no. 42)
- 'Roll of Honour' of the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. (Inside the church)
- Stone commemorating the civilian victims and all the soldiers killed during the battle for Bure. (Church square)



'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 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division. (On high ground to the south-west of the village, via Rue de Mirwart)

#### NEARBY

- In Tellin, the Church Bell and Carillon Museum, established in an old post-house, and tracing the history of the industrial heritage of Tellin.  
Rue Grande 23, B-6927 TELLIN –  
☎ 32 (0)84 36 60 07
- In Grupont, the 'Maison Espagnole' dating from 1590, a former inn and lawcourt. Today a listed building.
- In Grupont, a monument to the courage of Belgian mine-clearance units and to the heavy price they paid during their operations at the end of the war.

#### SAINT HUBERT

From 26 December '44, a squadron of French SAS paratroopers attached to the British 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division was in action east of the town, thereby protecting the flanks of the British paratroopers and establishing links with the 87<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division by carrying out reconnaissance patrols.

Ahead of the men of the 87<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division, on 11 January 1945 and coming from Grupont, a patrol of French SAS paratroopers entered the town, chasing out the last Germans and capturing 20 prisoners in the process. The paratroopers then flew the French flag on the front of the town hall and the local authorities gave them the keys to the town by way of gratitude.



Plaque reminding us that French paratroopers were the first to enter St. Hubert and established their command post in this house. (Rue du Marché no. 3)

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Plaque dedicated to the 87<sup>th</sup> 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 '44. (Place du Marché no. 18 – Hôtel de l'Abbaye)
- Monument dedicated to the Chasseurs Ardennais Regiment, in particular for their Ardennes Campaign in May '40. ('La Roseraie', Avenue des Chasseurs Ardennais).

## WORTH SEEING

- The Basilica, with its baroque 18<sup>th</sup> century frontage, its flamboyant 16<sup>th</sup> century gothic interior and its 11<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque crypt, as well as its altar dedicated to Saint Hubert.
- Pierre-Joseph Redouté Centre housing prints, engravings as well as lithographs of roses by this watercolour painter, who was born in St. Hubert in 1759 and was an artist at the Court of France. Rue Redouté 11, B-6870 SAINT-HUBERT – ☎ 32 (0)61 61 18 72
- Main courtyard and renovated frontage of the former abbey-palace.

## NEARBY

- In 'Fourneau Saint Michel', the Museum of Ironwork and Ancient Metallurgy presenting on its original site the techniques of iron smelting and forging, as well as artefacts and traditional ancient tools.
- Also at 'Fourneau Saint Michel', the Museum of Rural Life in Wallonia consisting of a group of some 50 ancient rural houses from various areas of the Walloon Region and rebuilt in this open-air museum.
- Musées provinciaux du Fourneau Saint Michel, B-6870 SAINT HUBERT – ☎ 32 (0)84 21 08 90 or 21 06 13

## CHAMPLON

After having advanced along the River Bronze, the Scots of the 5<sup>th</sup> Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders crossed Ronchamps and forcing the Germans out of the village of Mierchamps, they then captured Journal and sent out reconnaissance patrols.

On 14 January, early in the morning, one of these patrols linked-up with the GIs of the 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at the Champlon crossroads.

## MONUMENT

- Plaque commemorating the link-up between a Scottish patrol of the 5<sup>th</sup> Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders and an American patrol of the 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. (Maison du Ski – Unveiling ceremony on 12 June 2004)

## BANDE

On 11 January '45, a patrol of the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian parachute battalion accompanied by Belgian SAS paratroopers left Marche-en-Famenne, entered the village of Bande and to their horror discovered the bodies of 34 civilians shot in the back of the neck on Christmas Eve and dumped in the basement of a ruined house. The youngest among them was barely 17 years old.

A few days later, the commander of the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion Parachute Regiment of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division decided to give the unfortunate victims of the German Gestapo a decent burial with full military honours.



*Memorial with the 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. (Alongside the main road N4)*

## MARCHE-en-FAMENNE

On 21 December, coming from the area around Aachen, the 84<sup>th</sup> 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. American positions and on 4 January, in the cold and a snowstorm, the Welsh soldiers began their attacks in the Marche-Hotton area. However, the

icy roads prevented armoured vehicles from supplying and supporting these troops in an efficient manner. Their advance was considerably slowed down by the wooded terrain cut by valleys as well as by the cold and snow, and despite the German artillery, minefields and roadblocks of felled trees, the Welshmen liberated the villages of Menil, Waharday, Rendeux and Grimbiemont.

After three days and nights of heavy fighting in the woods in freezing cold weather, the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division had lost 105 men before being relieved by the Scots of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. (Also see Lane 4, Page 31).



Plaque reminding us that the town was never occupied thanks to General Alexander Bolling and the bravery of the men of the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division who stopped the advance of the German troops. (Main courtyard of the 'Musée des Franks et de la Famenne', Rue du Commerce)

#### OTHER MONUMENT

- Monument dedicated to the English, Scots, Welsh and Canadian soldiers, and the Belgian and French SAS paracommandos, forming part of the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army of the 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group commanded by Field-Marshal Montgomery, and who fought in the Battle of the Ardennes. (Main courtyard of the 'Musée des Franks et de la Famenne' – Rue du Commerce – unveiling ceremony on 12 June 2004).

#### WORTH SEEING

- 'Musée des Franks et de la Famenne' presenting not only the Franks who settled in the area from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but also the splendid archaeological discoveries made in the area as well as traditions of the trades of yesteryear.  
Rue du Commerce 17, B-6900 MARCHE-en-FAMENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 32 70 60
- The 'Musée de la Dentelle' (Lace Museum) with its magnificent collection of lace, reminding us that the town was formerly an important and rare Walloon centre of lace-manufacture with bobbins, employing nearly 850 lacemakers.  
c/o S.I, Rue de Marche, Rue des Brasseurs, B-6900 MARCHE-en-FAMENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 31 21 35
- 'Le 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 1994.
- 'Camp militaire Roi Albert', Chaussée de Liège 65, B-6900 MARCHE-en-FAMENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 32 61 08
- The 14<sup>th</sup> century St. Remacle church with its 16<sup>th</sup> century baptismal fonts.

#### HOTTON

In the first days of January '45, it was from Hotton that several armoured and infantry units of the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps launched their troops in the Allied counter-offensive towards La Roche-en-Ardenne, their objective being to push the Germans back, clean-out the west bank of the River Ourthe sector, and link-up with the American troops. (Also see Lane 4, Page 32).

#### COMMONWEALTH WAR CEMETERY



The Cemetery is located at the southern end of the town on a wooded plateau, where the remains of 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 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division. (Off the road between Hotton and Menil).

### MONUMENTS

- Monument dedicated to the Belgian Commandos with a plaque commemorating the Belgian SAS. (Church square)
- Plaque dedicated to the 51<sup>st</sup> U.S. Engineer Combat Battalion. (Bridge over the River Ourthe)



*Turret of a British 'Firefly' Sherman tank dedicated to the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division and supporting armoured units. (On the east bank of the River Ourthe along the Hotton - Erezée - Manhay road)*

### WORTH SEEING

- 'Le Moulin à eau Faber' (The Faber watermill) dating from 1729 and still functioning today for the pleasure of visitors.  
c/o S.I. Hotton, Rue Haute 4, B-6990 HOTTON – ☎ 32 (0)84 46 61 22
- Le Musée 'Chez-nous au temps jadis' (The 'Bygone Days' Museum) presenting artifacts used in daily life in the time of our grandparents and great-grandparents.  
Rue Simon 33b, B-6990 HOTTON – ☎ 32 (0)478 64 00 52

### NEARBY

- The Grottos of Hotton, real crystal palaces, classified as a major site in Wallonia and described in the Michelin Guide under the label "Well worth a visit".  
B-6990 HOTTON – ☎ 32 (0)84 46 60 46

## La ROCHE-en-ARDENNE

On 7 January '45, early in the morning, in the freezing cold and over icy roads, the Scotsmen of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division left their standby positions to the south of Liège and headed towards the front line Marche – Hotton. Their mission was to relieve the exhausted Welsh units and to advance towards La Roche-en-Ardenne.

After having liberated the villages of Hodister, Warizy and Ronchampay, on 11 January the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Black Watch advanced along the River Ourthe towards La Roche. Shortly before midday, preceded by a mine disposal team and armoured reconnaissance vehicles of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Derbyshire Yeomanry Regiment, the Scots entered the town devastated by American bombing. They were followed by supporting armoured vehicles of the 1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry Regiment.

When the town was liberated from its last German occupants 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, Mierchamps, Erneuville and Ortho, which they liberated, and linked-up with the American troops.

(Also see Lane 5, Page 37)

### THE 'BATTLE OF THE ARDENNES' MUSEUM



*The only museum of the Battle of the Ardennes offering a British section.*

Spread over almost 1,000 m<sup>2</sup> (10,764 sq. feet) on three floors accessible by lift, the dioramas and showcases display over 100 dummies of American, British and German soldiers with their equipment and weapons, as well as uniforms given by British veterans who fought in the Battle of the Ardennes. The museum also

displays personal objects found on the battlefield, light and heavy weapons, documents and photographs, and some 20 military vehicles.

When entering the museum, please do not miss the model of the famous B17 'Flying Fortress' at a scale of 1:9. On the second floor, 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.  
Rue Chamont 5, B-6980 LA ROCHE-en-ARDENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 41 17 25



'Roll of Honour' Memorial erected to the memory of the 54 Scots killed during the Battle of the Ardennes. (Situating at the entrance of the town on the Hotton – La Roche road)

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Commemorative plaque reminding us that on 12 January '45, an armoured reconnaissance patrol attached to the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division coming from the heights of Samrée linked-up with the Scots of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division coming from Hotton. (Near the bridge on the River Ourthe on the corner of Rue de la Gare and Rue de Cielle).
- Sherman tank dedicated to the American units that participated in the liberation of La Roche and the surrounding area. (Esplanade Quai de l'Ourthe : unveiling ceremony in December 2004)



British 'Achilles' tank destroyer "Northampton" dedicated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry Regiment supporting the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division and which was the first tank to enter the town behind the 1st Black Watch. (Situating on the esplanade above the River Ourthe opposite the ruins of the mediaeval castle)

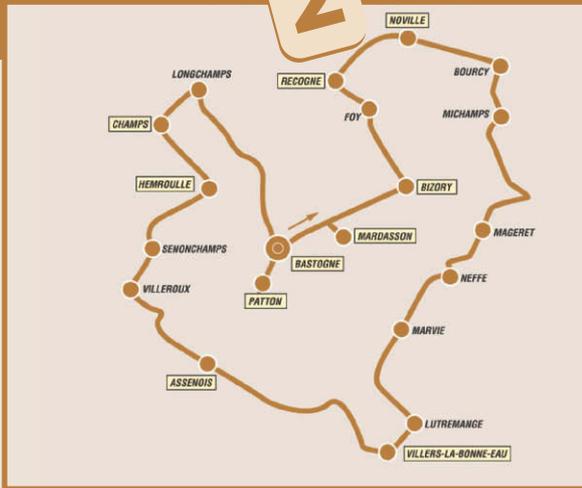
#### WORTH SEEING

- The ruins of a 9<sup>th</sup> century mediaeval castle built on a rocky outcrop dominating the town and the bends of the River Ourthe.
- A tourist train taking you around town and through the nearby forest to the high ground above a wildlife park.
- On the Deister plateau, the wildlife park with its stags, hinds, fallow deer, wild sheep, wild boars, wolves, lynxes, etc, and its cafeteria.
- The 'Musée de la Meunerie' (milling museum) situated in a 19<sup>th</sup> century watermill preserved in its original state. This is a tribute to the work of millers.  
La Petite Strument 62, B-6980 LA ROCHE-EN-ARDENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 41 10 80
- 'Les Grès de La Roche et le Musée du Jambon d'Ardenne' (La Roche sandstone and the Ardennes Ham museum), smoking hams in the potter's kiln.  
Rue Rompré 28, B-6980 LA ROCHE-en-ARDENNE – ☎ 32 (0)84 41 18 78

## LANE

2

## BASTOGNE



In their rest-area near Reims in the evening of 18 December '44, the paratroopers of the US 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division were put on a state of alert. Weather conditions not permitting an airborne drop, 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 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army, commanded by Field-Marshal Baron Hasso Von Manteuffel, outflanked the town from the north and the south. Bastogne and its defenders finally found themselves surrounded. 2. Panzer, spearhead of the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army, having been suddenly stopped on Christmas Eve in sight of Dinant, and considering that they could no longer cross the River Meuse and that Antwerp with its port installations could no longer be reached, the German High Command decided to concentrate “the main effort” on the capture of Bastogne.

Coming from the south, an armoured column of the 4<sup>th</sup> US Armored Division of General Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army decided to push ahead towards Bastogne, and on 26 December succeeded in breaking through the German siege.

Under heavy German artillery fire, little by little the American units managed to broaden the “corridor” through the German lines that the Germans attempted to close several times.

The battle for the capture of Bastogne would last until 17 January '45.



*Sherman tank of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, 'Thunderbolt', destroyed on 30 December '44 in heavy fighting around the hamlet of Renuamont. (Place McAuliffe)*

### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Division Artillery Commander and Acting Division Commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> 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).
- Stones of the 'Liberty Way'. (Place McAuliffe and along the road to Mardasson).

- Commemorative plaques dedicated to the 4<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> US Armored Divisions. (Place McAuliffe)
- Commemorative plaque dedicated to the 512<sup>th</sup>, 513<sup>th</sup> and 514<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadrons of the 406<sup>th</sup> 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)
- Turrets of Sherman tanks demarcating the defensive perimeter of the besieged town. (On the main roads into Bastogne).

#### WORTH SEEING

- Original Museum : a museum dedicated to the Ardennes, its fauna, ancient tools, and to the civilians and soldiers who lived through the battle for Bastogne.  
Rue de Neufchâteau 20, B-6600 BASTOGNE –  
© 32 (0)61 21 27 89
- Maison Mathelin : an historical and archaeological museum enabling us to discover Bastogne from prehistoric times to the dramatic winter of '44 - '45.  
Rue G. Delperdange 1, B-6600 BASTOGNE –  
© 32 (0)61 21 32 87
- Piconrue Museum : presenting the traditions and popular beliefs of the Ardennes, as well as religious artefacts and treasures.  
Place St. Pierre 24, B-6600 BASTOGNE –  
© 32 (0)61 21 56 14
- Saint Pierre church : with its 12<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque tower, its 15<sup>th</sup> century Mosanne Gothic nave, its 18<sup>th</sup> century pulpit sculpted by Scholtus, a master cabinet-maker born in Bastogne, and its 16<sup>th</sup> century polychromatic vault.

#### 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. 'The Liberty Way' was the idea of Major Guy de la Vasselais, Head of the French Military Mission to General Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army.

Wishing to commemorate the liberation with an imposing monument, Major Guy de la Vasselais decided to place a symbolic stone every kilometre along the route followed by the divisions of General Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 entry of the port of New York.



#### BASTOGNE HISTORICAL CENTER (B.H.C.)

Inaugurated on 31 May 1976 by the then Prince Albert who became King Albert II of Belgium, the museum, built in the shape of a star, displays an exceptional collection of uniforms and light weapons of the American and German troops who fought in the battle for Bastogne, as well as very realistic dioramas. An adjoining cinema shows film reports shot during the fighting by cameramen of the opposing armies.

Outside the museum stand a US M-10 Tank Destroyer, a Sherman tank and a German Jagdpanzer commemorating the violent tank battles that took place during the fight for the capture of Bastogne. Colline de Mardasson (Mardasson Hill), B-6600 BASTOGNE – © 32 (0)61 21 14 13



## MARDASSON



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 our 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 Ambassador of the United States and placed in an urn in a sealed casket. This was presented to the President of the United States, 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 of the Ardennes are named alongside their unit insignia. On top of the Memorial, a promenade equipped with viewpoint indicators enables visitors to discover 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.

## BIZORY

### THE WOOD OF PEACE



American veterans of the Battle of the Ardennes were very touched by the idea that their name could be inscribed on a plaque at the base of a tree, their “personal tree” that will survive them and blossom. In 1994, not far from Mardasson, on the initiative of the local UNICEF Committee, the ‘Wood of Peace’ was inaugurated. Viewed from the sky, the 4,000 trees planted in an area of 3 hectares (7.4 acres) represent the UNICEF symbol : mother and child, the universal symbol of tenderness. The perimeter is flanked by panels presenting the towns of the World Union of Martyred Towns of Peace, established in 1982 on the initiative of town of Bastogne.

## RECOGNE

After the Battle of the Ardennes, on 4 February '45, 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 German cemetery is distinguished by a chapel built from pink Eifel sandstone, its internal walls being of slate.

It contains the remains of 6,807 German soldiers, the youngest of whom was barely 17 years of age and the eldest of whom was 52.



Stone dedicated to the Native American Indians, part of the American troops and who were mainly deployed in the transmission of coded messages. (Situating near 'La Ferme des Bisons')

#### WORTH SEEING

• 'La Ferme des Bisons' ('The Bison Farm') and its exhibition enabling us to discover Native American Indian culture, traditions and craft.  
 Recogne, B-6600 BASTOGNE –  
 © 32 (0)61 21 06 40

#### 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 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.



'Enclos des Fusillés' in memory of the 7 civilian hostages killed by the Gestapo on 21 December after a long and painful interrogation.

#### MAGERET

Arriving in the village on 19 December at 02:00 hrs, the vanguard of Panzer 'Lehr' under the command of General Fritz Bayerlein attacked the roadblocks set-up by Combat Team Cherry. After fierce fighting, 15 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 '45.

#### 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 '45.

#### 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 succeeded in occupying.

The village was finally liberated on 9 January '45. Meanwhile, the civilian population had paid a heavy price in lost human lives and in destruction.

#### 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 35<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division and the 4<sup>th</sup> US Armored Division of Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, the Germans withdrew and the village was finally liberated on 10 January '45.

## MONUMENT

- Dedicated to the 35<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division, 'Santa Fe'. (Lutremange).

## ASSENOIS

On the Moselle front, as General Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army prepared to launch a major attack on the defences of the Siegfried Line, on 19 December '44 the American High Command ordered him to move his divisions ninety degrees 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 exhausted and "frozen to the marrow".

Finally, the sky cleared and enabled Allied air operations to resume as well as the re-supply by air-drops of those besieged in Bastogne, and also facilitated the advance of Patton's troops.

In the afternoon of 26 December, on orders from Patton, tanks of the 37<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion under the command of Lieutenant Charles Boggess, pushed-on towards Assenois and succeeded in breaking the German cordon around Bastogne, linking-up with the 326<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne. A column of ambulances immediately exploited the "Assenois corridor" to Bastogne then returned 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.



Belgian army pillbox, part of the defensive constructions of 1935 to guarantee the neutrality of Belgium. It bears a plaque commemorating the link-up of the troops of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division with the besieged paratroopers of the 101 Airborne Division, as well as a plaque dedicated to Lieutenant Charles Boggess.

## 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, repulsed 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 '45, they would re-occupy the village.

## HEMROULLE

On 22 December, following a heavy snowfall, Major John D. Hanlon, commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 502<sup>nd</sup> 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 hometown, Winchester. In the course of a remembrance ceremony, he was made an honorary citizen by the local authorities.

The village of Hemroulle was never occupied by German troops.

## MONUMENT

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

## CHAMPS

Defended by the 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101<sup>st</sup> 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 local 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."*

### LONGCHAMPS

In the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division's defence plan for the town, this village would be turned over to the 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment and the zone was expected to remain very calm for a long time. However, on 3 January '45 and for several days, the American paratroopers would have to face the tanks of 9. Panzer, attempting to break through the American lines. But despite heavy losses, the GIs would resist fiercely.

On 12 January '45, the American paratroopers who had nicknamed the area "Misery Wood" were relieved by an armoured unit.



Stone dedicated to the 502<sup>nd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. (Towards Compogne)

### BASTOGNE ( Place Mercy )

George S. Patton, Jr., born in California in 1885 and educated at West Point Military Academy, had already won renown as the commander of an armoured unit in France in 1918. In November 1942, he disembarked in North Africa as a Lieutenant-General. Later he landed in Sicily as General commanding the US 7<sup>th</sup> Army. In August 1944, heading the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, Patton landed in Normandy and undertook his lightning drive across France to the Moselle, from where he wished to launch a major attack against the Siegfried Line and its German defenders.

But on 19 December, following orders from the American High Command, he turned his units through 90 degrees, attacked northwards, broke the siege of Bastogne, and continued towards Houffalize where he linked-up with units of the 1st US Army commanded by General Courtney Hodges. After the Battle of the Ardennes, Patton, at the head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army, undertook a long and victorious march through Germany, finally stopping under orders in the vicinity of Prague. Appointed Military Governor of Bavaria, he was nevertheless relieved of his duties.

He died on 21 December '45 following a car accident, and in accordance with his wishes, he was buried among his men in the American military cemetery of Hamm in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.



Memorial dedicated to General George S. Patton and unveiled in 1963 in the presence of his grandson. (Place Mercy)

### OTHER MONUMENT

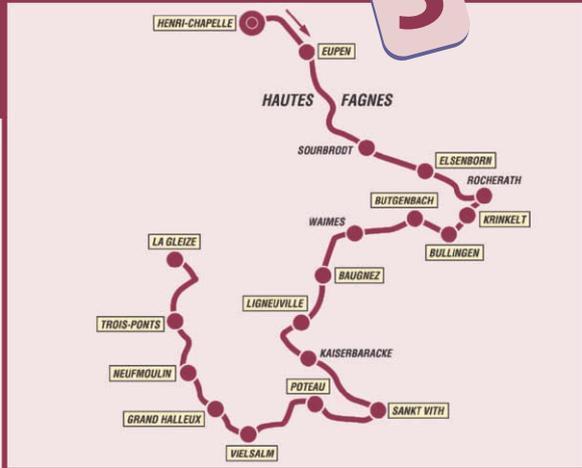
- Plaque dedicated to the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion of Belgian Fusiliers attached to Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army (On the right side of the Patton Memorial).

**Lane 2 has been established according to the historical route signposted by the Authorities of the Town of Bastogne.**

## LANE

3

## THE BREAKTHROUGH OF THE GERMAN 6<sup>TH</sup> PANZER ARMY



Composed of Waffen SS divisions famous for their fanaticism and savagery, the 6<sup>th</sup> 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 little suited to the movement of armoured columns.

The initial breakthrough was to be carried out by 1. and 12. SS Panzer. The spearhead of the attack would be a Kampfgruppe (Task Force) of 1. SS 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 surprised by the start of the offensive, the American units reacted vigorously to restore their lines of defence, stopped the advance of the German columns, and inflicted a considerable delay on their armoured units.

During his advance, disrupted by American units which several times obliged him to modify his route, Peiper became infamous for numerous massacres of civilians and American prisoners. The Kampfgruppe Peiper was finally stopped at La Gleize. The advance of 12, 2. and 9. SS Panzer was also stopped. The breakthrough of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army was brought to a halt.

Believing that the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army would never reach the Meuse, the German High Command decided to pull it out of the combat zones and ordered it to move to the eastern front in order to stop the Russian troops in their advance towards Germany.

### HENRI-CHAPELLE

Provisionally laid out in September 1944 by the 1<sup>st</sup> 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 whom were killed during the Battle of the Ardennes and in the fighting in Germany in the autumn and winter of '44. The remains of many shot-down American airmen are also buried here.

### AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY



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.

US Military Cemetery, Rue du Mémorial, B-4852 HOMBORG – ☎ 32 (0)87 68 71 73

### MONUMENT

- Dedicated to the US 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, ‘The Big Red One’, which liberated the region in September ’44 and participated in the Battle of the Ardennes. (Route Henri Chapelle - Battice).

### NEARBY

- The Fort of Battice, built in the 1930s, one of the most powerfully armed, and defended by 750 men. In May 1940, during the invasion of Belgium, it held out for 12 days in the face of German attacks.

Route d’Aubel, B-4651 BATTICE – ☎ 32 (0)87 68 71 73

- Remember Museum ’40-’45, mainly dedicated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, ‘The Big Red One’, which liberated the area in September ’44 and later participated in the Battle of the Ardennes. Installed in an old farm, the museum is made up of dioramas representing scenes of the Battle of the Ardennes. It also houses souvenirs and equipment donated by American veterans. It’s a museum with a human dimension, the major exhibits being a transport truck of the ‘Red Ball Express Normandy – Ardennes’, and a Sherman tank.

Les Béolles 4, B-4890 THIMISTER-CLERMONT – ☎ 32 (0)87 44 61 81 (visits on request)

### 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. Also the town suffered intensive aerial and artillery bombardment.

### MONUMENT

- Dedicated to the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, ‘The Big Red One’. (Place d’Amérique, opposite the church)

### WORTH SEEING

- As well as the Eupen Carnaval, the Town Museum presents reconstructions of the interiors of houses of the wool-production era in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Rue Gospert 52, B-4700 EUPEN – ☎ 32 (0)87 74 00 05

- The Jacques Chocolate Factory where visitors can learn about the history and manufacture of chocolate; visit the production floor and see the collection of old equipment.

Rue de l’Industrie 16, B-4700 EUPEN – ☎ 32 (0)87 59 29 67

- St. Nicholas church, also known as “The Cathedral”, built in the 18th century with three naves of equal height.

### ELSENBORN

While preparing to launch a major attack to capture the River Roer dams to the north-west of Monschau, on 16 December the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 6<sup>th</sup> 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 the Elsenborn Ridge.

### TRUSCHBAUM MUSEUM



Museum inaugurated on 12 September 1998, retracing the history of the Elsenborn Military Camp built

in 1895 by the Prussians. This camp served successively as an instruction centre, an artillery depot, and would house both Polish and Russian prisoners of war. The military camp is nowadays occupied by the Belgian army. A museum immerses visitors in the long history of the camp and also retraces the Battle of the Ardennes period through dioramas and documents of the time.

Camp Elsenborn, B-4750 BUTGENBACH – © 32 (0)80 44 21 05

### KRINKELT – ROCHERATH

Also called ‘The Twin Villages’, these villages were defended on an extended front by the 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The 99<sup>th</sup> had recently moved into Europe and was positioned there to gain limited combat experience, but would suffer violent and bloody attacks by the battle-hardened troops of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army. On 16 December the “rookies” of the 99<sup>th</sup>, nicknamed “The Battle Babies”, stopped the German units and considerably 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.



*Memorial dedicated to the fighters of the 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, “The Checkerboard”, for their valiant defence of the northern sector of the salient. (Near the church in Krinkelt)*

#### OTHER MONUMENT

- Memorial in homage to the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Infantry Division, ‘The Indian Head’, which fought in the sector. (Near the church in Krinkelt, beside the monument to the 99<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division)

### 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 to use routes allocated to other units of the 6<sup>th</sup> 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.



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

#### WORTH SEEING

- Saint Eloi (Saint Eligius) Church, built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, an architectural jewel with a single nave.

## BÜTGENBACH

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

### MONUMENT

- Plaque reminding us that General Eisenhower stayed in the village for several days in early December '44. (On the wall of the Villa Kirsch, Rue Zum Walkerstam no. 11)

### WORTH SEEING

- Nestling in the wooded green countryside, Bütgenbach Lake with its dam and leisure centre.

### NEARBY

- 'Krippana', a 2,500m<sup>2</sup> (26,910 sq. feet) exhibition of marvellous Christmas nativity scenes from all over the world.  
Hergensberg 4, B-4760 MANDERFELD –  
© 32 (0)80 54 87 29

## BAUGNEZ

Upon learning that an American anti-aircraft artillery brigade had established its headquarters 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. While the tanks of the German spearhead continued their advance towards Ligneuville, the rest of the German column arriving at the crossroads opened fire on the prisoners. Some of them took refuge in a nearby café, but the Germans set fire to it and shot the survivors.



*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. The flowerbed consists of roses donated by the rose-growers of Tyler, Texas. (Baugnez crossroads)*

## 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 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. The SS were furious and in reprisal shot eight American soldiers.

### MONUMENT

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

## SAINT VITH

The capture of the 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 the advance of the aggressors.

On 18 December, the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 of the American troops would inflict a delay of five days on the

Germans, who finally decided to bypass the town to the north and the south and to continue their advance.

The town was becoming an “American salient” in the advance of the enemy troops, and considering that from then on Sankt Vith would become indefensible and could be surrounded, on 22 December, against the wishes of the American High Command, Field-Marshal Montgomery ordered a withdrawal of the troops to new defensive positions on the west bank of the River Salm. 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 7<sup>th</sup> US Armored Division that had been obliged to abandon it a month earlier.



Stone dedicated to the 106<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division, ‘The Golden Lions’, who fought in the Schnee Eifel and a lot of whom were captured. (Kloosterstrasse, next to the school)

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Monument dedicated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Infantry Division, ‘The Indian Head’, which fought for our

liberty. (Alte Aachenerstrasse)

- Monument in homage to the civilian victims of the Allied bombing of the town. (Cemetery)
- Plaque dedicated to the 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. (Wall of the Hôtel de Ville)



Monument dedicated to the 168<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion referring to its Presidential Military Citation and a Belgian ‘Croix de Guerre’ awarded for bravery by Prince Regent Charles. (Bois du Prümberg, towards Schonberg-Schlierbach)

#### WORTH SEEING

- ‘Musée de la Vie Régionale’ (Museum of Regional Life) reflecting life in the Fagnes and Eifel area.

Scharzer Weg 6, B-4780 SANKT VITH –  
 ☎ 32 (0)80 22 92 09

#### POTEAU

Located not only on the main supply route, Sankt Vith - Vielsalm - La Baraque de Fraiture, of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, Poteau also lay on one of the attack routes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army and was thus a vital strategic crossroads.

On 18 December and for one week thereafter, fierce fighting took place between the US 14<sup>th</sup> Cavalry

Group and units of 1. SS Panzer and later 9. SS Panzer. The crossroads was taken and retaken

several times by both the Americans and the Germans. On Christmas Eve, following orders received, the Americans abandoned the crossroads and withdrew towards Vielsalm. Nevertheless, the advance of 1. SS Panzer of the German 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army had been greatly delayed.

The crossroads was nicknamed 'Dante's Inferno' by the fighters. It also featured in a German propaganda film report.

### POTEAU 44 MUSEUM



© Photo: Poteau 44 Museum

A former customs post that displays dioramas, documents and photographs mainly based on the fighting that took place to capture the crossroads, as well as military vehicles.

Poteauerstrasse 22, B-4780 POTEAU –  
 ☎ 32 (0)80 21 74 25

### VIELSALM

It was in Vielsalm on 17 December that Major-General Robert Hasbrouck, commanding the 7<sup>th</sup> 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 inflicted a considerable delay on the advance of the troops of Sepp Dietrich's 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army.

But following Field-Marshal Montgomery's order to withdraw, General Hasbrouck left his Vielsalm headquarters on 23 December.



*Dedicated to the 7<sup>th</sup> US Armored Division, 'The Lucky Seventh', and its commander General Hasbrouck, and to the 3,500 soldiers killed in action in the Sankt Vith area. (Junction of Avenue de la Salm and Rue du Vieux Marché)*

### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Sherman tank symbolizing the strong resistance by 7<sup>th</sup> Armored Division and its attached units which halted the advance of the 6<sup>th</sup> 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)

### WORTH SEEING

- AThe 'Archéoscope du Pays de Salm' presenting mysterious legends of the Vielsalm Forest and its subterranean wealth, as well as the history of the Salm area.  
 Avenue de la Salm 50, B-6690 VIELSALM –  
 ☎ 32 (0)80 21 57 68

### GRAND HALLEUX

Having received the order to relieve the 82<sup>nd</sup> US Airborne, the 75<sup>th</sup> US Infantry took position along

the River Salm, and at dawn on 15 January '45, the men of 291<sup>st</sup> US Infantry Regiment left Grand Halleux to make attacks in the surrounding hills.



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

### NEUFMOULIN

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



Monument dedicated to the 291<sup>st</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion that victoriously opposed the advance of the German tanks. (At the side of the bridge)

### OTHER MONUMENT

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

### TROIS-PONTS

On 18 December '44, coming from Stavelot, Peiper's vanguard decided to push towards Trois-Ponts and Werbomont and on towards the bridges over the Meuse. But on the approach of the German tanks, the men of the US 51<sup>st</sup> 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 82<sup>nd</sup> US 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 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment occupied a defensive line Trois-Ponts - Basse - Bodeux and, at the price of heavy losses, halted the advance of the German troops.



Monument in homage to the soldiers of the 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. (Road to Marche, access through the Parc Communal opposite the church)

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Plaque dedicated to the US 51<sup>st</sup> 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 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. (On the Amblève bridge, on the road from Stavelot to Trois-Ponts)
- Monument dedicated to the civilians murdered by the SS in reprisals. (At the side of the bridge over the Amblève).

## 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 having just been destroyed, and American paratroopers, supported by an armoured unit, having sealed-off the valley of the Amblève, Kampfgruppe 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, 1. 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 MUSEUM

© Photo: Musée Décembre 44



A museum with dioramas displaying the advance of 1. SS Panzer and its Kampfgruppe commanded by Lt-Colonel Peiper, as well as the American units that halted the German tanks. Not forgetting a vast 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.

Rue de l'Église 7, B-4987 LA GLEIZE –  
© 32 (0)80 78 51 91

## OTHER MONUMENTS

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

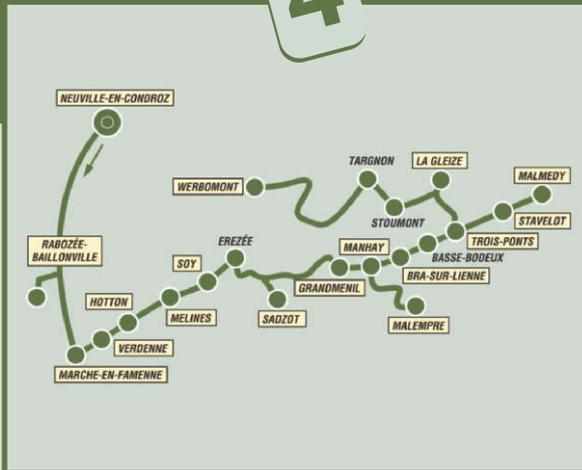


*A 69-ton Royal Tiger tank reminding us that Kampfgruppe Peiper, spearhead of the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army, was stopped at La Gleize and therefore never reached the River Meuse. At the end of the war, like all military vehicles remaining in combat zones, a scrap-metal company should have recovered the tank abandoned by Peiper; but it became the subject of a "deal". In fact, in exchange for a bottle of brandy the 'Royal Tiger' would remain in La Gleize forever.*

## LANE

# 4

## THE STOPPING OF THE 6<sup>TH</sup> AND 5<sup>TH</sup> 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 hassled by the powerful assaults of the German tanks, the American units were forced to with-

draw. But thanks to their rapid organization of more favourable defensive positions, and thanks also to reinforcements and the power of their artillery, American units hindered the advance of the German columns and significantly slowed them down.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army sector, following a badly-executed airborne operation when his paratroopers landed outside the dropping-zone, Colonel Friedrich 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.

For the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army all hope of crossing the River Meuse evaporated. The German High Command then decided that "the main effort" would be borne by the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army. But after 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 that the port of Antwerp would no longer be the strategic objective, 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 prevent the achievement of this new objective.

### NEUVILLE-en-CONDROZ

US Military Cemetery inaugurated in 1960, where 5,328 soldiers are buried who died in the capture of Aachen in October '44 and later during the Battle of the Ardennes.

### AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY

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, B-4121 NEUVILLE-EN-CONDROZ – © 32 (0)4 371 42 87



### **RABOZEE – BAILLONVILLE**

On the evening of 22 December '44, the 327<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, coming from the area around Aachen, positioned its batteries in this sector in support of units of the 84<sup>th</sup> 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 in the 'Verdenne Pocket'.

### **MONUMENT**

- Plaque dedicated to the 327<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion of the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, 'The Rail-Splitters'. (Wall of the chapel, Rue de la Chapelle)

### **MARCHE-en-FAMENNE & VERDENNE**

The wooded heights stretching alongside the road between Marche and Hotton, and located between the Ardennes massif and the Famenne plain, represents a promontory that, once crossed, gives open access to the River Meuse. Conscious of the danger represented by the advance of German tanks towards the Famenne plain, the Allied High Command ordered the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, located near Aachen, to move towards Marche-en-Famenne.

On the evening of 20 December, the first American units took-up position along the ridgeline Hollogne - Verdenne - Marenne - Menil with the task of stopping at any cost the advance of the German tanks. At the same time a roadblock was established

near Hollogne on the route Bastogne – Namur, thereby obliging 2. SS Panzer to change its itinerary.

Meanwhile, not having succeeded in crossing the Ourthe at Hotton, 116. Panzer turned around to pass through La Roche again and advance towards Marche, passing through the village of Verdenne.

In the afternoon of 24 December the Germans occupied the village.

On Christmas night, the Americans counter-attacked, and after savage fighting occupied the village, which was then taken and retaken several times by each side. On the evening of 26 December, after extremely bloody combat and house-to-house and sometimes hand-to-hand fighting, Verdenne was definitively liberated. Only 600 survivors of 116. Panzer managed to escape from the 'Verdenne Pocket'.

On 3 January '45, the units of the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division, relieved by the Welsh of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division, moved to occupy new positions between Hotton and Manhay and participate in the counter-offensive in accordance with the Allied plan.

(Also see Lane 1, Pages 12 and 13).



Memorial for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1994 of the Battle of the Ardennes, in memory of the 2,000 American and German soldiers who lost their lives in the course of heavy fighting that took place between 23 and 26 December '44. (Bourdon-Verdenne crossroads)

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Plaque dedicated to the 335<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division. (Holloigne, Route de Bastogne no. 135)
- Stone dedicated to General Alexander Bolling. Monument dedicated to the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps. (See Lane 1, Pages 12 and 13)

## WORTH SEEING

- ‘Musée des Francs et de la Famenne’; ‘Musée de la Dentelle’; ‘Musée des Chasseurs Ardennais’. (See Lane 1, Pages 12 and 13).

## HOTTON

Coming from Houffalize, but considering the bridge over the Ourthe at La Roche unreliable for the crossing of an armoured column, on 20 December 116. Panzer decided to head for Samrée, Dochamps, Erezée and Soy and to cross the river at Hotton. But the efficient resistance of the American units blocked the German tanks at the entrance to the town. So they turned around and headed back towards La Roche.

(See Lane 1, Pages 13)



*Turret of a British ‘Firefly’ Sherman tank dedicated to the 53<sup>rd</sup> Welsh Division and supporting armoured units. (On the east bank of the River Ourthe, along the Hotton - Erezée - Manhay road)*

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Monument to the Belgian Commandos and SAS Paras.
- Plaque dedicated to the US 51<sup>st</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. (Also see Lane 1, Page 14)

## MELINES - SOY

Having failed to cross the River Ourthe at Hotton, the 116. Panzer column turned around and returned to La Roche. Meanwhile, the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry

Regiment, sent to reinforce the Quatre-Bras crossroads, harassed the advance of the German armoured column.



*Monument dedicated to the 517<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment for its heroic defence. (Crossroads of routes Hotton - Soy and Ny - Melines)*

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Monument dedicated to the crew of a tank and the infantrymen who were riding on it, who died on 3 January ’45, the first day of the Allied counter-offensive. (Melines - Soy road)
- Monument dedicated to Armored, Infantry and Airborne units who fought in the sector. (Melines - Soy road)
- Plaque dedicated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armoured Division. (On entering Soy, first house on the left)

## SADZOT

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

## MONUMENT

- Stone dedicated to the 87<sup>th</sup> Mortar Battalion, the 509<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 289<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division. (At the end of the dead-end road)

## 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 that

they eventually broke through, forcing the American tanks to withdraw. However, the village was retaken the following day by the American troops.



*Panther tank of 2. SS Panzer, 'Das Reich', abandoned in the village when it ran out of fuel. (Erezée - Manhay crossroads)*

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Monument dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division, 'Spearhead'. (Erezée - Manhay crossroads)
- Plaque dedicated to the 238<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. (Along the Grandmenil - Manhay road)

#### MANHAY

Heading towards Erezée and coming from La Baraque de Fraiture, at the entry of the village the tanks of 2. SS Panzer ran into American tanks and paratroopers. After having lost 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.

#### MONUMENTS

##### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Stone dedicated to the men of the 325<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment of the 82<sup>nd</sup> US Airborne Division. (Opposite the Maison Communale)
- German Pak 40 mm (1.6 inch) antitank gun. (Opposite the Maison Communale)

#### MALEMPRE

Situated on the road from Trois-Ponts to Hotton that the German armoured columns wanted to use, the village was the scene of heavy fighting in the

face of the advance of 2. SS Panzer, which succeeded in occupying the village on Christmas night. But in the first days of the Allied counteroffensive, the village was liberated by American infantry and armoured units.



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

#### BRA-sur-LIENNE

In order to stabilise the front line in stronger positions, Field-Marshal Montgomery ordered the realignment of units of the 82<sup>nd</sup> 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 !

#### MONUMENT

- Plaque reminding us that General Gavin, commanding the 82<sup>nd</sup> US Airborne Division, 'All American', installed his headquarters from 22 to 24 December in Château Naveau (no. 37).

## TROIS-PONTS

Coming from Stavelot, the vanguard of Kampfgruppe Peiper headed towards Trois-Ponts, its objective being Werbomont and then the bridges over the River Meuse. But as the armoured column approached, the men of the 51<sup>st</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion blew-up the bridge over the River Amblève, forcing the German tanks to change their itinerary and continue towards La Gleize.

(Also see Lane 3, Pages 28 and 29)

## MONUMENTS

- Monuments to the 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 51<sup>st</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion, and to civilians. (See Lane 3, Page 29)

## 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, Kampfgruppe Peiper neutralized 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 to 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 their itinerary towards Trois-Ponts, where they would wreak vengeance by killing many civilians on their way.

Given the advance of the German tanks and in order to stop Peiper from capturing the enormous fuel depot, 6 km-long (3.7 miles) on the Stavelot - Francorchamps road, soldiers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Belgian Fusilier Battalion guarding the depot set fire to the first rows of jerricans of fuel, creating a gigantic wall of flames.



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

## OTHER MONUMENTS

- Memorial dedicated to the civilians murdered by the SS in December '44. (On the Trois-Ponts to Stavelot road, on the left at the entrance to the town)
- Stone dedicated to the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. (Site of the old abbey)
- Memorial in tribute to the civilians murdered by the Germans in '44. (Site of the old abbey)
- Plaque dedicated to the Allies killed in the liberations of September '44 and January '45. (Site of the old abbey)
- Stone in memory of the GIs of the 526<sup>th</sup> Armored Infantry Battalion, 835<sup>th</sup> Tank Destroyer Battalion, and the 291<sup>st</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion. (Chemin du Château, on the right)
- National monument to the memory of the Belgian mine-disposal units. (Avenue des Démineurs, towards Malmedy).

## WORTH SEEING

- Remains of an 11<sup>th</sup> century church in the grounds of the old abbey.
- Inside the restored abbey buildings : the 'Museum of the Principality of Stavelot-Malmedy' presenting 13 centuries of this ecclesiastical State; the 'Museum of Guillaume Apollinaire' commemorates the time spent by the poet in the area; and the 'Museum of the Spa-Francorchamps Lane' covering the history of this prestigious racetrack with its high-powered cars and motorbikes.

Abbaye de Stavelot, B-4970 STAVELOT –  
☎ 32 (0)80 88 08 78

## MALMEDY

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 Otto Skorzeny tried to enter the town of Malmedy. But the commandos ran into stiff resistance from the American defenders of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 'Norwegian Battalion' of American soldiers of Norwegian origin.

However, for reasons still unexplained, on 23, 24 and 25 December, Malmedy suffered intensive and devastating bombing by the American Air Force. This bombing created a large number of victims, not only among the civilians but also among the American defenders of the town.



Monument dedicated to the American units that liberated the town in September '44 and those who fought against the Germans in December '44. (To the left of the Cathedral)

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

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

#### WORTH SEEING

- 'Musée du Papier' (paper museum) illustrating its Chinese origin as well as various production techniques over the centuries. And in the same building the 'Musée du Carnaval' displays costumes, masks, documents and models of carnival floats.

Place de Rome 11, B-4960 MALMEDY –  
© 32 (0)80 33 70 58

#### LA GLEIZE

Coming from Stavelot and Trois-Ponts, the vanguard of Kampfgruppe Peiper passed through La Gleize and decided to head for Cheneux, continue to Werbomont, and then towards the bridges over the River Meuse. (Also see Lane 3, Page 29).

#### MUSEUM

December '44 Museum. (See Lane 3, Page 29)

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Royal Tiger tank; 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division; 80<sup>th</sup> Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion; 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment; and the 740<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion. (See Lane 3, Page 29)

#### WERBOMONT

In their rest area near Reims on evening of 17 December, paratroopers of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division were put on alert. Weather conditions did not permit an airborne drop, so they rushed towards Bastogne by road. However, on their way they received an order to continue on 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.



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

## LANE

5

## FROM BASTOGNE TO HOUFFALIZE



Thanks to their quick deployment, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, ‘The Screaming Eagles’, and the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, ‘Tiger’, arrived ahead of the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army of General Hasso von Manteuffel, whose objectives had been to cross the River Meuse between Dinant and Namur, and continue towards Brussels and then Antwerp in support of Sepp Dietrich’s 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army.

Confronted by determined American resistance, the German units bypassed Bastogne to the north and south and continued resolutely 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.

Indeed, in the course of a crisis meeting, General Eisenhower asked Patton to launch a counterattack in the direction of Bastogne. Commanding the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army, Patton symbolizing the qualities of speed, efficiency and military tactics, decided to withdraw several divisions from the Moselle front, including the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, to turn them 90 degrees and to send them towards Bastogne. But the advance of his troops was slow, made difficult by the rain and snow, hard fighting and numerous losses. However, the day after Christmas, tanks of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored 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 engaged in the sector continued their advance in the direction of Houffalize where, on 16 January ’45, they linked up with units of General Hodges’ 1<sup>st</sup> US Army coming from the north, thereby capturing the German salient.

### BASTOGNE

Bastogne, an important crossroads, was defended tenaciously by paratroopers of the 101<sup>st</sup> US Airborne Division and a unit of the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. Von Manteuffel decided to cut the main roads leading into the town and to bypass it to the north and south, ordering his 2. Panzer to press on towards the River Meuse.

But on Christmas Eve, the spearhead of the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army was suddenly stopped and annihilated within sight of Dinant. Realising that the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army would not cross the River Meuse, the German High Command decided to take Bastogne at any cost.

The day after Christmas, a column of the 4<sup>th</sup> Armored Division charged towards Bastogne and in Assenois succeeded in breaking the German siege of the city.

(Also see Lane 2, Pages 16, 17 and 18)



*General Anthony McAuliffe and Sherman tank of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, 'Thunderbolt'*

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Commemorative plaques, stones of the 'Liberty Way', the Mardasson Memorial, the Patton Memorial, etc. (See Lane 2, Pages 16, 17 and 18)

#### MUSEUMS

- Bastogne Historical Centre; Original Museum; Maison Mathelin. (See Lane 2, Page 17)

### **La ROCHE-en-ARDENNE**

On 10 September '44, the town celebrated its liberation by the American troops. But during their retreat, the Germans blew-up both the town bridges across the River Ourthe. One of the bridges being rebuilt by the American engineers, La Roche again became a strategic crossroad.

Believing the Houffalize sector to be strongly defended, on 20 December 116. Panzer moved towards La Roche. But considering the rebuilt

bridge to be unreliable, the armoured column crossed the town, advanced towards the villages of Dochamps and Samrée, and drove towards Hotton to cross the River Ourthe there, while refuelling on the way in the depots abandoned by the Americans.

In the face of the determination of the American units defending Hotton, the German tanks turned around, returned to La-Roche, and finally decided to cross the Ourthe on the Bailey bridge that the Americans had not taken the time to destroy when withdrawing. They then headed towards Verdenne and Marche-en-Famenne.

In their strategy of harassing the advance of German troops crossing the town, the Americans hammered them with heavy artillery fire, and on 26 and 27 December, taking advantage of improved weather conditions, the American High Command decided to bomb La Roche, destroying most of it. Some 114 civilian victims were found in the ruins. (Also see Lane 1, Pages 14 and 15)



*Plaque commemorating the link-up between an American patrol of the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the Scots of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. (Corner of Rue de la Gare and Rue de Cielle)*

#### OTHER MONUMENTS

- Memorials to the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division; the 1<sup>st</sup> Northamptonshire Yeomanry; Sherman tank. (See Lane 1, Page 15)

#### MUSEUM

- 'Musée de la Bataille des Ardennes'. (See Lane 1, Page 14)

### **MARCOURT-MARCOURAY**

Several days after the start of the Battle of the Ardennes, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Armored Division commanded by General Rose took position on a line of defence from Hotton to Manhay, its mission to stop the

advance of German troops and to 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. His vehicles being practically out of fuel, the order to break-out could not be executed, and the American attempts to disengage and to recover parachuted supplies failed.

On Christmas night, General Rose ordered Colonel Hogan to destroy his vehicles, to cross the German lines and to rejoin the American positions. After a 14-hour march, the 400 survivors reached the sentry-posts of the 84<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Soy. They were quickly re-equipped and on 3 January '45 took part in the counter-offensive.

#### MONUMENT

- Plaque dedicated to Colonel Hogan who had established his command post in the Maison Sutter. (Rue Principale, Marcouray)

#### BEFFE

Stopped within sight of the village of Beffe, occupied by numerically superior German units, Task Force Hogan was forced to withdraw to better defensive positions in Marcouray.



*Sherman tank dedicated to Colonel Hogan of the 3<sup>rd</sup> US Armored Division, 'Spearhead', and to the 771<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion. (Place de l'Église)*

#### 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 villagers. Dochamps was finally liberated on

7 January '45, but upon returning home, the villagers found it looted and in ruins.

#### MONUMENT

- Stone dedicated to the 84<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division, 'The Rail-Splitters' and to the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Armored Division, 'Hell on Wheels', who liberated Dochamps on 7 January '45.

#### SAMREE

At the start of the Battle of the Ardennes, the task of the 7<sup>th</sup> Armored 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.

#### MONUMENT

- Plaque dedicated to the valiant fighters of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Armored Reconnaissance Battalion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Armored Division "Hell on Wheels" who died liberating the village.

#### BARAQUE de FRAITURE

Slowed down right 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.

Meanwhile, conscious of the strategic importance represented by this hub at the crossroads of the Vielsalm - La Roche and Houffalize - Liège highways, on 19 December Major A. Parker decided 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 numerically superior German forces, the American defenders abandoned the crossroads. Some were captured, others managed to rejoin their units. Major Parker was wounded and had been 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.



*A 105 mm (4.1 inch) Howitzer identical to those used by the crossroads defenders, positioned here on the initiative of C.R.I.B.A (Centre for Research and Information on the Battle of the Ardennes), and a stone in homage to the defenders of 'Parker's Crossroads' on the initiative of the Lions Club of Haute Ardenne.*

### 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 '45.



*Sherman tank saved by villagers in 1950 from scrap metal dealers who had already begun their work of cutting it up.*

### HOUFFALIZE

Nestling in the narrow valley of the River Ourthe, Houffalize is a strategic stopping-point on the major highway from Bastogne to Liège.

In May '40, before withdrawing, the Belgian Chasseurs Ardennais had blown-up the town bridge in the face of advancing German troops.

On the night of 19 December '44, the bridge, rebuilt in the meantime, enabled American paratroopers of the 82<sup>nd</sup> US Airborne Division, coming from Reims, to reach their assembly zone in Werbomont, 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 decided to change his itinerary and to head 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 of Houffalize.



*Monument to the link-up on 16 January '45 of the troops of Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army with those of Hodge's 1<sup>st</sup> Army. (Place de janvier '45)*

### OTHER MONUMENTS

- 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 '45. (Place 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)
- Statue of Pogge, a character from the folklore of Schaerbeek, recalling the links of sponsorship and friendship which unite Houffalize and the Brussels suburb of Schaerbeek. (Rue de Schaerbeek)

### WORTH SEEING

- 'Houtopia' or "The World of Children", a recreational, games and learning centre enabling children to learn their rights and responsibilities while enjoying themselves, not forgetting the discovery area and the recreational play area.  
Place de l'Église 17, B-6660 HOUFFALIZE –  
© 32 (0)61 28 92 05

## THE FINAL DAYS OF THE 'BATTLE OF THE ARDENNES'



*Malmédy – Jeep of the 30<sup>th</sup> US Infantry Division on a town street. (US Army photo)*

On 17 January '45, having achieved all his objectives, Field-Marshal MONTGOMERY decided to withdraw the British 30<sup>e</sup> Corps from the 'Battle of the Ardennes' and to deploy it to the Netherlands, in order to prepare for a major airborne and ground operation into Germany with a crossing of the River Rhine : 'Operation Varsity', which he had been planning for some time.

returned under American command in the 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group of General BRADLEY.

On the German side, the 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army of Sepp DIETRICH left the Ardennes for the eastern front to halt the progress of the Russian troops towards Germany.

On 28 January, the date generally reckoned to be the last day of the 'Battle of the Ardennes', the German Army was pushed back to its starting positions of 16 December '44.

The "Ardennes" of the Ardennes had been eliminated and the Germans had lost the initiative on the western front.



*Bastogne – A street in the town in January '45. (US Army photo)*

It was the end of the 'Battle of the Ardennes'. It was also the end of the offensive and the occupation of our country after four long years.



*Houffalize – The town after the terrible Allied bombing raids. (US Army photo)*

The battle front then moved off eastwards, leaving behind it a train of grief and destruction.

But the scarred and battered towns and villages of the Ardennes drew from their new-found freedom the courage to rebuild the ruins left by the war.



*Celles – German tanks after the battle for the 'Celles Pocket'. (US Army photo)*

## REFLECTIONS

Sixty years on, certain remarks are necessary.



*Krinkelt – German tanks after the battle for Krinkelt. (US Army photo)*

By its Ardennes offensive, the German High Command postponed the entry of the Allied armies into Germany. But that respite cost them very dearly in men and equipment and was the prelude to the final victory of the Allies on 8 May 1945.

Thanks to the transport of American and British reinforcements, as well as a determined resistance, the Allies managed to establish sound defensive positions enabling an efficient counter-offensive.

Even if nobody underestimates the importance of the Battle for Bastogne, nevertheless it has to be admitted that the tenacity of the American defence in the sector Elsenborn – Krinkelt – Sankt Vith obliged the German High Command to recognize that their troops would never reach Antwerp and its port, which forced them to shift the “main effort” from its northern sector offensive to Bastogne.



*La Roche – The main street after the American bombing raids. (Ch. Orban de Xivry photo)*

The American victory at Bastogne had a beneficial effect on the military staff, the troops and the people of Allied countries, and caused the town of “Nuts” to go down not only in history but also in legend. Although limited in men and duration, the participation of the British troops proved to be useful and efficient and their contribution cannot be overlooked.

However, due to the arguments which developed between Field-Marshal MONTGOMERY and the American Generals, including EISENHOWER, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), HITLER almost achieved at least one of his objectives, namely a rupture on the Ardennes front of the Anglo-American alliance that the great political and military men had concluded to fight for the freedom of the nations and their people.

But by their energetic counter-attack, the Allies succeeded in transforming into victory what could have become a rout.



*Champlon – 14 January '45, link-up of the Cameron Highlanders with GIs of the 87<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. (Imperial War Museum photo)*

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## **COLOFON**

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Realization: LIELENS & PARTNERS

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#### **Office de Promotion du Tourisme**

##### **Wallonie-Bruxelles**

Rue Marché aux Herbes, 63  
B – 1000 Bruxelles  
Tél.: +32-(0)2/504.03.90  
Fax: +32-(0)2/513.04.75  
www.belgium-tourism.net  
E-mail: info@opt.be

##### **C.A.T.P.W. (Centre d'Action Touristique des Provinces Wallonnes)**

Rue de l'Eglise, 15  
B – 6980 La Roche  
Tél.: +32-(0)84/41.19.81  
Fax: +32-(0)84/41.22.23  
www.catpw.be  
E-mail: ardenne@catpw.be

#### **USA**

##### **Belgian Tourist Office**

220 East 42 nd street  
room 3402  
New York, NY 10017  
Tel. : +1 212 758 8130  
Fax : +1 212 661 2953  
www.visitbelgium.com  
e-mail : info@visitbelgium.com

#### **UNITED KINGDOM**

Belgian Tourist Office Brussels &  
Wallonia  
217 Marsh Wall  
LONDON E14 9FJ  
Free Brochure Line : 0800 9545 245 (UK  
only)  
Tel. : +44 (0)20 75 31 03 90  
Fax : +44 (0)20 75 31 03 93  
www.belgiumtheplaceto.be  
e-mail : info@belgiumtheplaceto.be

#### **SCANDINAVIA**

Office de Promotion du Tourisme  
Wallonie-Bruxelles  
Rue Saint Bernard, 30  
B - 1060 Bruxelles

## **BELGIUM**

##### **Province of Walloon Brabant**

Tél.: +32-(0)10/23.63.31  
www.brabantwallon.be

##### **Province of Hainaut**

Tél.: +32-(0)65/36.04.64  
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##### **East Belgian**

Tél.: +32-(0)80/22.76.64  
www.eastbelgium.com

## **ABROAD**

Tél. : +32 2 504 02 20  
Fax : +32 2 513 69 50  
www.belgium-tourism.net  
Email : isabelle.tapie@opt.be

#### **POLAND**

Urząd Promocji Turystyki "Walonii-  
Bruksela" (O.P.T.)  
Przedstawicielstwo Dyplomatyczne  
Francuskiej Wspólnoty Belgii i Regionu  
Walonii  
Ul. Ks. I. Skorupki 5 - Vle Pietro  
PL. - 00-546 Warszawa  
Tel. : +48 (22) 583.70.06  
Gsm : +48 604 733 953  
Fax : +48 (22) 583.70.03  
www.belgium-tourism.net  
e-mail : mjanow@poczta.onet.pl

#### **C.R.I.B.A**

##### **Center Research Information Battle of the Ardennes**

Rue du Progrès, 22  
4032 CHENEE – LIEGE (Belgium)  
http://users.skynet.be/bulgecriba  
e-mail : henri.rogister@skynet.be