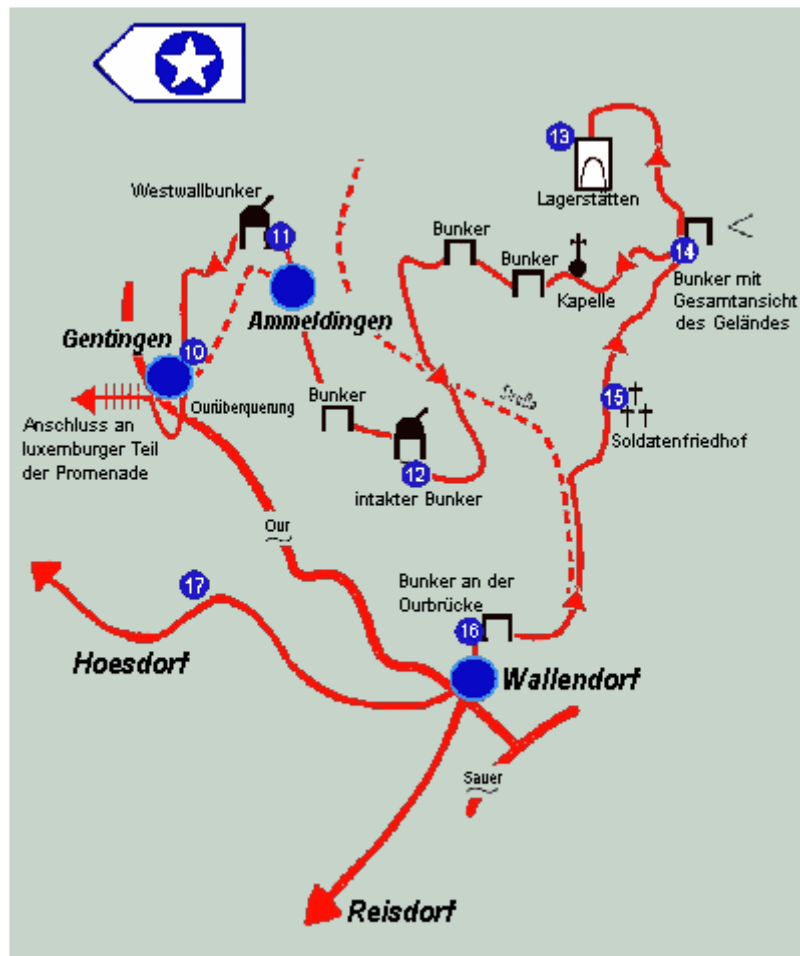


The German side (Along parts of the "Westwall/Siegfried Line") around Wallendorf
 (A transborder extension of the Hoesdorf-Bettendorf (Luxembourg) historical circuit, inaugurated in May 2000)



Welcome to the German border area extension -- across the Our river -- of the existing 1944/1945 "Battle of the Bulge"-related historical circuit on the heights overlooking Hoesdorf and Bettendorf, that was inaugurated in May, 1996.

Aware of the transborder importance and significance of this "living history lesson" and in response to popular demand, the organizers of the initial circuit on the Luxembourg side of the geographical border river Our, in close cooperation with the German authorities of Wallendorf, jointly decided to extend the existing trail along the extended border area of Wallendorf, Germany. By doing so, the German and Luxembourg co-initiators of this project not only wanted to provide an insight of the historical aspects of the German territory-keyed chapter of those dramatic and tragic World War II events, but also intended to document the solid ties of transborder neighborhood, friendship, partnership and cooperation in many fields as an outcome of the painful World War II experience and as a token of mutual digestion of history to draw lessons for future generations.

The "Wallendorf" section of the trail provides an in-depth view of parts and places of interest of the former "Westwall" or sometimes known as the "Siegfried Line" coupled with an appreciation of the terrain on both sides of the Our river, which German forces had to negotiate during the initial onslaught in December 1944. Most of the remaining structures of the "Westwall" in this area were destroyed during the W.W. II aftermath and the early occupation years of Germany, but even as ruins they continue to tell striking stories and convey lasting impressions.

(For your own safety: Please don't explore destroyed or fenced-off bunkers in the surrounding areas, as they may still contain hidden dangers or may collapse).

Please refer to the map below and follow the (*) signs, as you progress along the trail. The overall length of the "Wallendorf" tour is about 8 KMs and of little difficulty type. The distance of the combined tour is approximately 18.5 kilometers in total with an estimated average walking time of about 5 hours. Please be prepared for a rather lengthy and steep incline crossing the Our river at Gentingen bridge (tourstop 10) to connect to (tourstop 9) on the Luxembourg side in case of reverse order of the walking tour).

While walking those historical ground,s please respectfully remember all those unknown who fought, suffered, and died here -- the opposed military forces and the civilians trapped in the cross fire. Shall their sacrifices never have been in vain! The following is the descriptive narrative on the various tourstops of the "Westwall" trail starting at the Our river bridge in Gentingen and ending at the machine gun pillbox at the Our river bridge in Wallendorf, Germany (which is in fact the

terminal tourstop on the German side, should you decide to walk the entire 18.5 KM - long combined tour). Please follow the ("star") signs on the Luxembourg side (after crossing the bridge) to proceed in direction of Hoesdorf to the starting point of the "Hoesdorf-Bettendorf plateau segment of the historical circuit (10 Kms)

Tourstop 10: The Our river crossing -- the Gentingen makeshift bridge

At this very place, where today's small bridge spans the Our river to link Germany and Luxembourg, German army engineers constructed an improvised heavy infantry bridge, capable to bear the weight of smaller armored fighting vehicles and artillery prime movers. Prior to the German December 16, 1944 surprise attack, terrain reconnaissance had confirmed that, because of the gentle slope on the opposite side of the Our river banks, this most probably the best suited location for the construction of a heavier infantry bridge in the sector. The bridge was intended to act as the main crossing point of the divisional artillery (partially horse-drawn), as well as the 18-ton "Hetzer" tank destroyers and other tracked vehicles.

The Our river, which is normally less than 80 cm deep, was much swollen then, due to heavy rainfall in early December 1944. Its banks on both sides were very muddy. According to available statistics, the Our river was 1.50 - 2.30 meters deep, then; much too deep and too much current for wading the vehicles across.

It was only after the 05:30 a.m. half hour artillery barrage on opposite enemy positions on December 16, 1944 that the engineers of the 352nd VGD's own engineer battalion, supported by additional Corps engineer troops began transporting the available prepositioned steel elements of the bridging equipment to the Our for assembling. As not sufficient equipment had reached the supply points behind the "Westwall", it took until the evening of December 17, before the bridge was declared to be derivable.

Lt. Günter Stottmeister, who as a company commander of the 352nd Engineer battalion. reports:

"Unfortunately the promised bridge material had not been delivered on account of supply difficulties, so that we would have to build a wooden makeshift bridge that would bear the weight of the "Hetzers."..... The artillery fire began at 05:30 a.m. As quickly as possible, with efforts unimaginable today, trees up to 50 centimeters in diameter were felled with axes, two man saws, and NSU power chainsaws. They were moved down to the shore of the Our with winch and line, where the actual construction of the bridge began at daybreak. Meanwhile, though, numerous assault troops of the grenadier regiment had crossed the high waters by means of rubber boats and infantry footbridges (in the immediate neighborhood of our construction site and in nearby Ammeldingen) and were marching forward. We would clearly hear the noise of battle on the opposite side. A first attempt to equip the bridge with a central pier built of lumber failed. The swift current at this point tore the construction apart, even before it could be fastened. Since time was critical, the central pier was dispensed with and the bridge was built with two reinforced end piers. The construction of the various components using improvised equipment, and with trees as the raw material, went on until twilight on December 16. Then we suddenly came under heavy mortar fire aimed at the site of the bridge. The American defensive fire forced us to stay under cover for about two hours The bridgebuilding continued all night with artificial moonlight provided by heavy anti-aircraft searchlight batteries and sporadic U.S. artillery- and mortar fire. The wounded were taken by dozens to Dr. Krause at the battalion's command-post bunker. Torn arms and legs were amputated before my eyes it was horrible.

Toward noon of December 17, parts of the wooden frame could finally be joined together and reinforced after they had been pushed across the Our. To increase the bridge's carrying capacity, another layer of tree trunks was put over it, for we did not know if the bridge could hold 25 tons of weight. That evening we had reached the point at which the bridge was declared to be driveable, and the first "Hetzer" tank nervously drove over the makeshift bridge. It held! Other tanks followed, then several RSO towing tractors with antitank and artillery guns in tow. A great number of our own engineer vehicles had been so damaged by the American artillery that they were impossible to maneuver or totally useless. Thus we had only a few trucks to transport our material as we marched farther ahead. All through December 18, other units of the division followed with their heavy equipment, mainly artillery guns, most of them still horsedrawn, a few full-tracked vehicles and supply trucks, as well as the field kitchens of the infantry companies. Since the bridge had absolutely to remain capable of being used for supplying, the greater part of what remained operational of the 352nd Engineer battalion, served at Gentingen to secure it. For this, we only had mortars and machine guns."

(Preceding is excerpted from the book "The battle of the Bulge in Luxembourg/Volume 1 by Roland Gaul)

A similar, but more elaborate bridge was constructed a little further upriver at the small town of Roth an der Our by the Pi. Bn 5 of the 5th Fallschirmjägerdivision. It was completed on December 18, bringing the heavy assault guns and divisional artillery across the Our. Both bridges were constantly harassed in early and mid-January 1945 by U.S. artillery fire as well as by fighter aircraft of the 9th U.S. airforce. They were often damaged, but always repaired, serving by towards the latter part of January during the retreat of the beaten German troops to take up new defensive positions behind the "Westwall."

Tourstop 11: Gentingen "Baustärke B"-type "Westwall" bunker

As can be clearly seen, the present bunker at the entrance of the small Our town of Gentingen, had a larger gun port facing the narrow country road, as well as the banks of the Our river. It was originally meant to be equipped with a 37 mm antitank gun during the time of its construction and was used as such until the 1940 campaign in the West was over, when most "Westwall" bunkers were gradually stripped of their initial weapons, as they were needed elsewhere.

During the rearming period (July-September 1944) of the Westwall, this bunker, just as most of the remaining "Westwall" defenses could not accommodate larger caliber antitank weapons, such as a 7,5 cm antitank gun, without major transformation of the structures. Due to absence of time, it was not possible to effectively rearm this bunker, which merely continued to only serve as a solid protection for observation teams. Please note the thickness of the walls as well as the partially collapsed ceiling due to the blasting effect of shaped charge (during postwar demolition works).

According to eyewitness narrative, this very bunker was eventually manned shortly before the early morning December 16, 1944 German surprise attack by crack Infantry troops awaiting to cross the swollen Our river even before the German artillery barrage that started at 05:30 a.m. One of the young German "Volksgrenadier"soldiers who actually stayed in this and several neighboring bunkers from early December 1944 on, was 17-year old private and messenger Friedrich Schmäscke of G.R. 916, 352nd Volksgrenadierdivision (VGD).

The following is a short paragraph of his personal recollections in connection with the bunker life, shortly before the order for the attack was given:

" The company commander took our sealed message envelopes at the bunker; they included detailed maps of our sector. A tense silence prevailed as we handed him a small stack of pamphlet, which we had also been given at the battalion headquarters. Printed on red paper was a daily order to the soldiers of the western front , signed by OB West, Field Marshall von Rundstedt. It said roughly: "Soldiers of the western front. From the North Sea to the Swiss border, an advance such as the world has never seen, has begun. I expect obedience and fulfillment of duty from you to the last; you sense it all, we are gambling everything! It is time to turn the war around." The peaceful silence of the bunker was now replaced by restless muttering. There were even comrades who broke out in wild euphoria. The company commander ordered me to pass to all lieutenants and lower-rank leaders of the individual platoons the orders at their companies' command posts by telephone. After half an hour, everybody had assembled. A discussion inside the bunker with the artillery fire-control officer followed. The objective of the attack was made known, as was the time for crossing the Our river. Then we had a hot meal. Some of the men ghoulishly called it our hangman's meal. Our iron rations were distributed and checked. Some of the men turned to their ration of liquor to improve their depressed mood a bit. Then the soldiers began to prepare their assault packs; everything nonessential was left back at the bunker. Hand grenades, Panzerfausts (antitank launchers) and extra small arms ammunition were passed out again, and then we had to lie down and rest while fully dressed. ... Now we knew and that was it ... the unavoidable! The last hours before something we could not change, were a strange time for us. There was a numbing effect on us; our minds were cleared and a terrible emptiness resulted. No thoughts of home, mother, father, brothers and sisters. I could have screamed, and at the same time I knew that it would have been senseless. Other soldiers crawled inside themselves as if they could escape everything. But there was no escape. The morning of December 16 came inexorably. We were to be awakened at 4:00 a.m. But that was not necessary, for nobody slept much anymore. Shortly after 4:00 a.m. we left the bunker and silently climbed down the mined trails in direction of the river."

NB: Friedrich Schmäscke took part in the murderous and exhausting fighting on the "Hoesdorf Plateau" opposite the bunker, and was later on wounded in the afternoon of December 18, 1944 in Longsdorf, Luxembourg, only 4 Kms from here.

(Preceding is excerpted from the book "The Battle of the Bulge in Luxembourg/Volume 1" by Roland Gaul)

Tourstop 12: Close-up visit of a "Doppelgruppenunterstand in Baustärke "B" - type "Westwall" bunker

The bunker you are about to visit, suffered relatively little damage due to shelling. Again, its use was primarily the observation of the south banks and heights overlooking the Our river. Further downhill on the small road, there are two additional "C" type fighting bunkers, located in such a way to protect the flanks of the present "B-type pillbox." As usual, all bunkers were connected via underground cable for field telephone and wire equipment.

As can be seen, the service entrance was always in the backside of the bunker, with a machine gun, mounted in a side armor plate reinforced- gun port, to protect the heavy entrance door. Of special interest are also the concrete bullet deflector housing the machine-gun mount, as well as the air vents of the bunker's ventilation system. Through steel tubes imbedded in the wall, hand grenades could be thrown outside from the inside of the bunker, where the steep incline trench around the backside of the bunker would increase the concussion and fragmentation effect of the explosion.

The bunker has several separations inside, that could be sealed with additional gas-tight steel doors. Several original inscriptions, such as "Feind hört mit or Rauchklappe zu" (the enemy is listening or close stove door), can still be see inside. A nearby spring and cistern provided drinking water supply by means of a pump.

This bunker (as many others) on the immediate Our river front line, was known to the 5th U.S. Armored Division units upon their arrival in mid September 1944 as a result of a Luxembourg engineer, who in the earlier war years, had secretly drawn an accurate map of this section of the "Westwall," which provided vital combat intelligence to the Americans. As a consequence, the bunker, after being shelled at several times by U.S. artillery (which ripped off its natural camouflage and left its reinforced concrete structure exposed), was not considered a serious threat, although it was normally occupied by German soldiers, who were sometimes observed entering it at sunset and leaving it again at dawn during the time prior to the "Bulge". On one occasion, an American reconnaissance patrol became engaged in close quarter fighting after clashing with a German patrol near this bunker. Very often, the U.S. artillery fired propaganda rounds over the Our river to the bunkerline to weaken the combat morale of the German "Westwall" defenders in an effort to make them run over and surrender.

The remaining structure of this bunker, located on Wallendorf community territory, was cleared by volunteers, and is presently preserved as a timeless and silent witness by the community and tourist office of Wallendorf.

Tourstop 13: "Westwall" storage tunnel

Apart from the purely combat-related structures, the "Westwall" also consisted of numerous support and storage elements, such as water cisterns, electrical power units, storage dumps... and so on. An example of the latter category is probably this reinforced tunnel. Also constructed around 1938, this m-long tunnel was primarily intended as a bomb- and shell proof shelter for the storage of fuel and ammunition, where nearby pillboxes and larger bunkers equipped with weapons, could draw additional ammunition from, should the need arise. In addition, the tunnel was used as a storage, supply, and distribution point for ammunition for field artillery and anti-aircraft units protecting the Westwall from the rear. Well ventilated with an almost constant temperature of degrees Celsius, it was also suitable for the storage of military rations and other food supplies. This was the case for instance during the earlier war years, when farmers were allowed by the Nazi party district administration to temporarily use the structure as a root cellar.

Probably by August 1944, the tunnel became militarily important again as an ammunition depot, but especially in early December 1944, when prior to the German surprise attack, logistics for the coming offensive were moved closer to the jump-off line under the cover of darkness by means of horse-drawn vehicles (to muffle the sound). It was not until December 14, 1944 (two days before the offensive) that the 5 Km deep denied access security zone (where for camouflage purposes no concentration of troops were allowed close to the immediate front-line), was lifted, that additional ammunition lots were brought in to prepositioned supply points to be handy, once the attack was launched. These ammunition dumps all had coded names -- for instance a nearby supply point was named "Marianne".

As such, the present tunnel was probably used all throughout the "Battle of the Bulge" as initially intended. Although the bulk of the inhabitants of Wallendorf were evacuated in early September 1944 as fighting action in the area was becoming imminent with the approach of the Americans, the tunnel also served as a shelter for remaining civilians during the extensive shelling and fighting in and around Wallendorf during the September 1944 operations.

The tunnel itself suffered no major damage and is frequently visited today as a daytime- and hibernation shelter for colonies of small bats (protected by law).

Tourstop 14: "B-Werk" - type "Westwall" bunker & chronology of facts (September - December, 1944)

As part of the direct front-line fortifications of the "Westwall" in this sector, the present "B-Werk" - type bunker was probably completed by "Organisation Todt (OT)" construction battalion workers in 1938. The larger structure with reinforced concrete walls up to a maximum thickness of 1,5 meters was designed to serve as an observation bunker with wide angle of view, as it is located on the heights overlooking the confluence point of the Our and Sauer (Sûre) rivers, as well as the highground on the Luxembourg side. This type of bunker was well furnished inside and could provide room for a squad (10-12 men). Apart from optical observation - and communication equipment, a power unit, ration and ammunition storage, its main armament consisted normally of machine guns, an automatic grenade launcher (mortar), and sometimes a static, directional flame-thrower for close defense. Again, this bunker, which was probably "disguised" as a garden house by means of a mock wooden front structure and camouflaged with natural overgrowth, had overlapping fields of observation and fire with smaller neighboring "C-Werk" type pillboxes.

As an indication: the entire "Westwall" defensive enterprise, which normally was about 10-15 Kms (average) deep for a total length of 650 Kms (ranging from the North Sea confluence of the Rhine on the Dutch border to the Swiss border), used up (according to available 1938 - 1939 statistics) during the final years of its construction, a total of 8 million metric tons of reinforced concrete. The total cost amounted to 3.6 Million Reichsmark (RM) and a total of approximately 400.000 workers from OT (Organisation Todt) construction battalions, RAD (German labor service) draftees, regular - and forced laborers, as well as prisoners.

--It is said (according to an eyewitness from Wallendorf) that Hitler himself, while on an inspection tour of the "Westwall" in the Eifel around August 22-28, 1938, briefly stopped to visit this very bunker and from its top took a look into Luxembourg.--

After to the German invasion of Luxembourg on May 10, 1940 and during the "Wehrmacht's" ensuing campaign in the West ("Fall Gelb" -- yellow plan), the present bunker had no longer a military importance. It was however hastily rearmed and reoccupied in August 1944, when the alarming news that the Americans were on the rush towards the borders of the German mainland, were circulating and it was obvious that Wallendorf was to become the frontline. (As the "Westwall" had temporarily lost of importance during the mid 1940 - mid 1944 time frame, numerous bunkers had been stripped in the meantime of their weapons and equipment (to equip the Atlantic wall) and it was not uncommon that due to lack of proper maintenance, communication lines, ventilation systems or power units were in poor condition, when the Americans hit the "Westwall" in this sector in September 1944).

On September 14, 1944, after a 4-5 hour artillery preparation, a major attack was staged on the part of mechanized elements of Combat Command R (CCR) of the 5th U.S. Armored Division, supported by troops of the 112th Infantry Regiment of the 28th U.S. Infantry Division in this sector to force the Sauer (Sûre) river to establish a bridgehead and push forward in direction of Bitburg to probe for the strength of the "Westwall." As this bunker was known to the Americans, due to intelligence provided by several Luxembourgers escorting the U.S. troops, it was shelled at by mostly 155mm projectiles. The shelling ripped off the bunker's natural camouflage, leaving it exposed. Heavy fighting in and around Wallendorf and subsequently the neighboring villages continued until September 23, when the U.S. task force, lacking adequate logistics and flank protection, had to withdraw after sizable casualties suffered from constant counterattacks by various German armored and infantry elements which were then globally under the command of the 1st SS Panzer Korps and/or the LXXX Armeekorps. Needless to say that the town of Wallendorf was almost wiped out due to artillery fire and strafing by fighters from the 9th U.S. Airforce.

-- Still today there are myths (primarily) on the American side around the unconfirmed story of Wallendorf civilians waving white flags from their houses to lure the Americans into a trap. Another story mentions the "Ghost of Wallendorf" -- a woman in white clothes directing artillery fire by moving from target to target. On the other hand, Nazi propaganda then highlighted that Wallendorf was deliberately wiped out by the "American murderers" and its inhabitants killed as a powerful message that the German soldier must never yield to protect the homeland --.

After the withdrawal of the Americans from the German side of Wallendorf to the south banks on the Luxembourg side overlooking the Our and Sauer (Sûre) rivers, the present bunker was constantly manned as a listening post and as a fire direction center for counterbattery fire for the German artillery further backwards. Sporadically, U.S. artillery fired "firepower demonstration" missions in this sector, but seldom could a U.S. shell destroy a bunker. After Thanksgiving Day (late November 1944), the 3rd battalion of 109th U.S. Infantry Regiment with its companies "L" and "I" occupied the highground opposite Wallendorf (refer to map). Wallendorf, at the same time, then marked the southernmost border of the entire 28th U.S. Infantry division -- it stretched from the Our and Sûre confluence point parallel to the flow of the Our river -- occupying a thin line of defense on the highgrounds -- for almost 32 Kms north up to Ouren/Huldange/(Luxembourg) -Bourg Reuland (Belgium). East of Wallendorf the American line of defense continued with elements of CCA/ 9th U.S. Armored division and the 4th U.S. Infantry Division in the general direction of Echternach on the south banks and heights of the Sûre river. On the German side, Wallendorf also marked the border line between the 352nd Volksgrenadierdivision (VGD) in the direction of Vianden), and the 276th VGD (whose commander, Major-General Kurt Moehring was killed on December 18, 1944 near Beaufort, in direction of Grundhof-Echternach).

At 5:30 a.m. on December 16, 1944, the German army staged its major surprise attack (known as the "Battle of the Bulge" or "Battle of the Ardennes"). After a 30-minute intense artillery and "Nebelwerfer"rocket barrage, German troops of the 352nd VGD, crossed the Our river in the Wallendorf-Gentingen sector to assault the outnumbered American positions on the Hoesdorf-Bettendorf plateau (please visit similar historical circuit on the Luxembourg side, starting at Hoesdorf or Bettendorf). The objective was to capture the vital road to Diekirch and Ettelbruck as well as the Sauer (Sûre) river bridges in this sector. After three days of constant intense fighting in the woods with numerous casualties on both sides, the remaining troops of the 109th U.S. Infantry Regiment withdrew in direction of Diekirch and further south, destroying the Sûre (Sauer) river bridges, with the 352nd VGD succeeding in gaining terrain until shortly after Christmas 1944, when counterattacked by elements of Gen. Patton's Third U.S. Army.

By late December 1944 until end of January 1945, the "Westwall" bunkers in the larger Wallendorf sector were primarily occupied by German rear echelon and guard units as a weak defensive force or to channel logistics.

On February 7, 1945 the bunkers became a key target, when attacked in combined action by artillery, infantry and engineer elements of the 4th 5th and 80th U.S. Infantry divisions during the initial phase of the Our- and Sauer (Sûre) river valley crossing operations of the Invasion of Germany. Numerous bunkers and pillboxes were attacked by flame-throwers, shaped charges and explosives after heavy pounding by large caliber artillery. Poorly armed and equipped, the "Westwall" bunkers were no longer a match for the overwhelming U.S. superiority; German army and sometimes "Volkssturm" units could hardly slow down the American advance. Bitburg was taken on February 28, 1945 by the 5th U.S. Infantry Division the U.S. progression continued steadily the Rhine bridge at Remagen was taken and

crossed by the 9th U.S. Armored Division on March 7, 1945 on May 7, 1945 Nazi Germany unconditionally surrendered.

During the early occupation years of Germany, the border areas were under the control of the Luxembourg army as a sub-zone in the French sector of occupation. It was also during this time, that most bunkers and pillboxes that had survived the effects of war, were destroyed or made unserviceable by American and French army engineers using tons of explosives and bulldozers.

It seems impossible to provide an accurate estimate of the American and German casualties in the Wallendorf area during the September 44 - February 45 time frame, the civilian casualties of the Wallendorf community due to war amounted to some twenty dead, wounded, mutilated, and missing. According to U.S. statistics, the September 1944 operations near Wallendorf took 792 American dead versus 3.392 (?) German casualties in the Hosingen - Born/Recht sector of the entire 5th U.S. Armored Division combat deployment.

Tourstop 15: German military cemetery

The small "Wallendorf" German military cemetery, overlooking the Sauer (Sûre) and Our rivers, as well as the Luxembourg border area, was established as early as 1948 Under the auspices of the German "Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge" (war grave care union), remains of killed in action German soldiers, who were temporarily buried in emergency field graves in the larger surrounding areas of Wallendorf on both sides of the two rivers during the September 1944 - February 1945 time, were relocated here after identification.

As can be seen from the personal data on the grave plaques, most of the German soldiers buried here, were very young. The dead are primarily from the following German units or sub-units, who either fought and died defending the "Wallendorf" bridgehead forced by elements of the American 5th Armored Division (late September 1944), or who fell later on during the Battle of the Bulge (December 1944 - January 1945) or during the invasion of Germany by U.S. troops in early February 1945: 2nd Panzerdivision; 108th Panzerbrigade; 352nd Volksgrenadierdivision; 276th Volksgrenadierdivision; 5th Fallschirmjägerdivision; 212th Volksgrenadierdivision; Volksworferbrigade 18; Volksartilleriekorps 406; and other smaller Corps-attached support- and engineer units.

Altogether, a total of 326 soldiers are buried here. The German military rank abbreviations on the present grave plaques are the following and stand for:

German rank	U.S. equivalent rank
SOLD. (Soldat)	private
GEFR. (Gefreiter)	corporal
O.GEFR. (Obergefreiter)	lance-corporal (British rank)
ST. GEFR. (Stabsgefreiter)	staff corporal
UFFZ. (Unteroffizier)	sergeant
FW. or FELDW. (Feldwebel)	master-sergeant
WACHTM. (Wachtmeister)	senior artillery NCO
LTN. (Leutnant)	lieutenant
O. LTN. (Oberleutnant)	first lieutenant
KAN. (Kanonier)	artilleryman (private)
SAN. (Sanitäter)	medical private
FUNK. (Funker)	communications/signal private
PION. (Pionier)	engineer (private)
UNBEKANNT	unknown (unidentifiable)

Occasionally, remains of soldiers still may be found . The last German soldier, found in this area, was discovered in 1993 on the "Niederberg" above Bettendorf (Luxembourg). As identification was impossible, he was buried as unknown at the German cemetery at Sandweiler near Luxembourg.

Please note: Most of the American soldiers killed in the sector of Wallendorf during the September 1944 - February 1945 time frame, are buried at the Luxembourg American Cemetery in Hamm, Luxembourg.

The specific details of the Wallendorf cemetery reflected below, were provided by the "Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge".

Tourstop 16: German Westwall machine gun "pillbox"

The bunker shown here, was in fact a reinforced concrete "pillbox" established as an observation and listening post with direct insight on the small bridge spanning the Our river and the "enemy" side -- Luxembourg (which was neutral at the beginning of WW II) -- and by September 1944, the "American" side of the area. The bunker had room for a 2-4 man crew with an armored gun port to accommodate an automatic weapon.

The specimen (the smallest bunker category of its kind) was commonly referred to as "Sonderkonstruktion - Doppelbunker Pak und MG in Baustärke C" in the classification system of German static defensive structures, was one of the many pillboxes constructed in the first line of this section of the "Westwall" parallel in this sector to the Our river, marking the border between Luxembourg and Germany. Early planning and excavation works for the construction of the "Westwall" (a static and heavily-armed defensive structure that stretched almost from the North sea coast down south to the Swiss border, following the political and natural borders of pre- World War II Nazi Germany), were already begun in 1936. The "Westwall" represented in fact the counterpart to the French "Maginot line," and can be seen as still in line with the military doctrine based on the World War I (static front) experience. For camouflage and deception purposes, the entire operation was then called "Bauvorhaben im Westen" (construction enterprise in the West). It was only in 1938 (after a major public speech by Hitler), that the enterprise with its defensive military nature to obviously protect the western borders of the "Reich" became officially known to the world as the "Westwall".

The bunkers and pillboxes close to the Our river, which were all located and constructed in such a way to mutually self-support each other by overlapping fire in case of an enemy attack, were normally all of this type (C-Baustärke), serving primarily as a solid medium artillery shell-proof shelter for front-line observation teams. A field wire and telephone network connected the various bunkers amongst themselves and with larger structures further back. There were no concrete "dragon teeth" obstacles in this area, as further up north. However, barbed wire obstacles and minefields usually located in front of the bunker's field of fire in direction of the river, supplemented its own protection.

The stone wall constructed in front of this actual pillbox, was in fact a deception and camouflage measure to give the impression of a garden wall. Other bunkers of this type may have been camouflaged as a shed, stable, or were heavily covered and overgrown with natural vegetation. Inside furniture consisted of 2-3 cots, a table, benches, a drinking water storage, ration and ammunition cache, lighting and communication equipment, a ventilating system, and sometimes a stove. Larger bunkers also had special mounts for periscopes or other sighting equipment. The gun port was normally reinforced with thick armor plate, leaving only a narrow slit for observation or for a weapon -- the heavy steel gas tight access door, was usually built in the backside of the pillbox.

Prior to May 10, 1940 (beginning of the German campaign in the West), the present pillbox served in its intended capacity (along with similar structures of the entire "Westwall"), but was no longer used after the victory of the "Wehrmacht" in the West. During the earlier war years, with Nazi Germany occupying Western Europe, the "Westwall" became temporarily insignificant, and it was not uncommon that most of the initially-armed bunkers were cleared of their weapons and even leased in rural areas for storage space. With the retreat of the "Wehrmacht" from Normandy and France in late summer 1944 in direction of the western borders of the "Reich," a major effort was made on the part of the Nazi leadership to rearm the Westwall to protect the borders. As arms technology had considerably changed from the time the "Westwall" was built, most of the larger bunkers (especially those intended to contain anti-tank- and artillery weapons), could no longer accommodate the larger caliber weapons and hence became almost useless, as time did not allow sufficient upgrading.

When as of September 11, 1944, the first Americans hit the German border in this area, they would normally find most small bunkers on the immediate front-line unoccupied. However , the "Westwall" and all its frightening bunkers continued to remain a powerful psychological weapon to the allies, as nobody had ever probed before for its real strength. After the American retreat from the Wallendorf sector (after a limited initial success by elements of the 5th U.S. Armored Division supported by elements of the 112th U.S. Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division) in late September 1944 and the following 3-month "quiet" period prior to the German December 16, 1944 surprise attack ("Bulge"), this "pillbox" was only occupied under the cover of darkness to continue serving as a listening and observation post to report incidents on the opposed highground, then held by elements of the 109th Infantry Regiment of the 28th U.S. Infantry Division. It provided only limited resistance to the U.S. forces in February 1945 during the beginning phase of the invasion of Germany. American and French engineers destroyed most of the neighboring bunkers and pillboxes during the post war occupation years.

Tourstop 17 (recent addendum on the Luxembourg side near Hoesdorf):

The crossing of the Our river in the Hoesdorf-Wallendorf sector and the assault on the Siegfried line (early February 1945)

After the January 1945 operations in northern Luxembourg, the 80 U.S. Infantry Division "Blue Ridge" was relocated to hold the high ground northwest Diekirch to Haller parallel to the Sauer river as of February 1. German units in this sector,

especially remains of the weary 352nd VGD after their retreat from the Sauer river valley and bridgehead had managed to reoccupy most of the "Westwall"- pillboxes and bunkers on the east banks and highgrounds of the Our river.

For about a week, 80 division organic units spent their time patrolling the east banks of the Our as well as training and preparing for the crossing of the river to attack the Siegfried line in this area. More specifically, the division's own 319th Infantry Regiment was called upon to carry out this task in the Hoesdorf-Wallendorf sector, whereas the 318th Infantry Rgt was to follow the 319th 3rd Bn and tie in from a jump off line near Bettendorf and the 317th Rgt was held in reserve in Diekirch.

In the early morning hours of February 7, 1945, the 1st Bn of 319th Infantry Rgt moved, under cover of darkness, from its assembly area at Kleinreisdorf to the vicinity of the Our river north of Wallendorf. Around 10:00 a.m. the 2nd Bn 319th Inf. , preparatory to forcing a crossing of the Our, closed into Hoesdorf. The battalion experienced considerable difficulty due to the high flood level of the Our, the swiftness of the current and heavy enemy artillery and "Nebelwerfer" concentrations. Engineers in support were unable to complete construction of bridges; thus all the crossings were made in assault boats. Units that had managed to get across, were pinned down by heavy mortar and accurate artillery fire on the north shore of the Our.

Units of the 319th Infantry Rgt were alerted to make a crossing early on the morning of February 8, 1945 and troops moved from their assembly area at Bettendorf into Moestroff and Kleinreisdorf preparatory to crossing. The regiment's 3rd Bn started to move to its crossing site, but at about 6:00 a.m. it had achieved no crossing due to German artillery shelling which wrecked the assault boats. Additional boats were brought up, but two subsequent crossings around 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. were unsuccessful. It was only on February 9 that elements of the 319th had managed to get across the Our near Wallendorf and were able to secure some terrain after overcoming enemy infantry counterattacks. Units of the 1st and 2nd Bn assisted in mopping up the high ground northeast Wallendorf and protect the north flank of the bridgehead.

It was only on February 11 that the 319th Inf. Rgt was able to assembly all its forces in an area approximately 1 Km northwest of the confluence of the Our and Sauer rivers after heavy fighting, spending the following two days mopping up pillboxes, pockets of resistance and expanding its bridgehead to the north and the east. Close artillery and heavy mortar support proved invaluable during those operations. On February 13-14, the Regiment continued clearing pillboxes north of Wallendorf as well as near Ammeldingen.

Private First Class Robert Harmon was a member of the anti-tank platoon of the Regimental Headquarters Company of the 319th Inf. Rgt and as such assigned to patrolling and combat missions in a bazooka team. He was ordered to cross the Our at Hoesdorf with elements of the 2nd Bn 319th Inf. Rgt. and recalls.

" We all did not have a clear idea of just what we were about to attempt. We were told we would make an assault crossing of the Our river into the "Westwall" forts and could expect heavy machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire. We had NO practice in working with the plywood assault boat (each of which was quite heavy, but large enough to carry up to 10 men together with their weapons and gear) We made an "approach" march of a few kilometers from some nearby village through the forests under the cover of darkness. Unfortunately, just as we organized the final approach towards Hoesdorf, German artillery came in and there were a number of casualties. This was not good for morale!

When we reached the area just above the village of Hoesdorf, where the assault boats had been placed by our combat engineers we found that the boats were "nested" one inside the other so that there were probably - half-dozen - of these fairly heavy boats jammed together. Prying them apart and organizing people into boat teams and getting the boats away from the place where they had been dumped, was a nerve-wrecking chore and more than one GI had his fingers or a hand caught in the boats as we tried to wriggle them apart.

That assault, that night, failed for my boat crew: Shells came in when we got to the river; the boats were tipping over in the icy water and one could hear the cries of the wounded and the men who were drowning because their equipment was dragging them under. We were in Hoesdorf for 2 or 3 days, I do not know. Finally the division commander arranged for some medium and heavy mortars (81 mm and 4.2" chemical mortars) to "zero" the Westwall forts with special attention to trying to drop shells just behind the pillboxes' escape and exit stairways on the German side of the hill opposite Hoesdorf. That "zeroing" of the heavy mortars took at least one full day. Then, some self-propelled 155 mm guns, firing a 100 pound projectile, rolled into Hoesdorf at dawn and finished all of the pillboxes in a few hours in the sector. They fired co-axial .50 caliber tracer rounds until the Germans closed the ports on their forts. Then, the 155 mm would fire. Usually one round -- usually , end of the story! I do not think they fired more than two rounds at any one fort. The range was short and the shells were accurate. When the high explosive projectile exploded in the Westwall forts, everyone inside ...died!

As we waited in the houses of Hoesdorf to make the crossings, there was a good deal of shelling. -- from the Germans into Luxembourg and from our guns and machine guns into Germany. There were a number of "quad fifties (4x.50 cal machine guns) which were part of our anti-aircraft units. These highly-effective guns, together with the 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns were used to sweep a barrage of rounds over the

German lines as "suppressing fire". The night of February 7-8, 1945, the whole valley was lit with tracers, the crash of artillery and the usual mysterious flashes of light which sweep over battlefields.

We finally crossed the river downstream at Wallendorf, late in the day and in the dark and proceeded up the hill into some small village beyond the Our river and Wallendorf. Somewhere up there, in Germany, I spent part of an afternoon lying on top of the rearmost Westwall bunker, talking to the German troops inside. We were trying to get them to surrender. There was a German mortar in the area, probably firing from a small forest a few hundred yards from where we were. When we heard the shells in the mortar tube, we would scurry off the bunker and into shallow foxholes scraped in the dirt around the pillbox. Our usual argument to the German soldiers was simple: "The war is lost" (der Krieg ist verloren). They finally came out in surrender and another GI and I marched them down the hill into some sort of regimental POW (prisoner of war) area.

I was anxious to be one of the guards taking them to the POW concentration point, because we all knew that this would mean a chance of a hot meal at regimental headquarters. And, that's what happened!" (Pfc. Robert Harmon, 319th Inf. Rgt., 80th Infantry Division.)

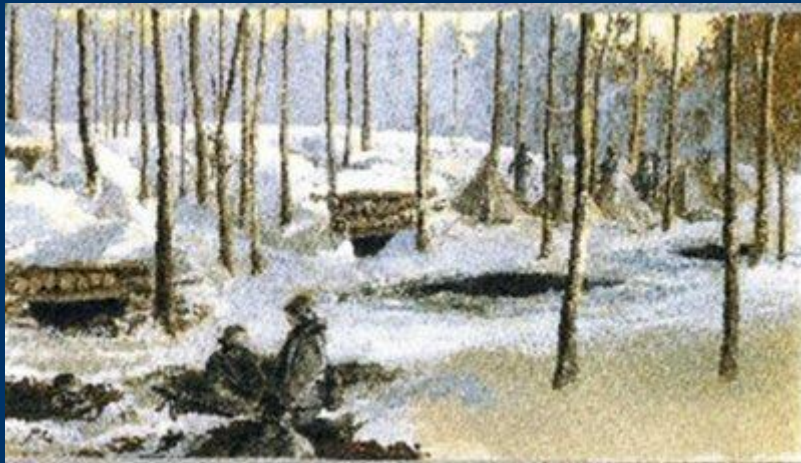
National Liberation Memorial at Schumanns Eck enhanced by Memorial Trail

On June 12, 2004, the National Liberation Memorial (NLM) Association (comprised of the "Bulge" museums of Ettelbruck, Clervaux, Diekirch and Wiltz) had invited to the official inauguration of the comprehensive and impressive memorial trail, documenting the tough fighting at sub-zero temperatures that raged in the dense forests around [Schumanns Eck](#) crossroads (near Wiltz) in December 1944 – January 1945.



The initiators of the existing Memorial had planned this trail for several years and the 60th anniversary appeared to be the appropriate occasion for the official inauguration.

NLM artist Fernand Zens had spent months of tireless work carefully plotting the trail, creating colored plates and narratives to go along with a number of self-explaining traces of the battle. Numerous foxholes, dugouts and countless shell craters are silent witnesses of the intense fighting.



German positions in the Schumanns Eck forest, as seen by NLM artist Fernand Zens.



American foxholes, as can still be seen today.

All in all, the entire trail is 2,8 KMs long and is easy to walk (no up-and downs). Together with the existing National Liberation Memorial with its situation maps and unit crests, the trail provides a lasting impression of the human tragedy that took place in those woods where hundreds of American and German soldiers were killed, MIA or wounded. The trail also comprises an additional memorial named "Massegraf" (mass grave), located at the exact site, where over 160 German soldiers and several American soldiers had been temporarily buried together in 1945 pending removal and reburial. The plaque is dedicated to "ALL SOLDIERS" killed in the woods around Schumanns Eck. The impressive inauguration ceremony was attended by over 300 guests including a delegation of 90th U.S. Infantry Division veterans, as well as high-ranking Luxembourg and foreign dignitaries. Enhanced by the Luxembourg army band and honor guard, the official ceremony was opened by a welcome speech by Mr. Pierre Brosien, NLM President, followed in turn by addresses of Mayors Romain Schneider and Nico Loes. The deputy chiefs of mission of the German and British Embassies, as well as U.S. Ambassador Terpeluk then gave their acknowledgements, before concluding remarks were made by Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker. The latter one highlighted the importance of the balanced and impartial documentation of this special chapter of history thru the memorial trail and underlined the reconciliation efforts between veterans in the context of the 60th anniversary.



Numerous high-ranking dignitaries, including Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, attended the official inauguration of the "Schumanns Eck Memorial trail".

The attendance was then invited to walk a section of the trail leading past the visible remains of the battle explained by beautiful artwork panels, created by Fernand Zens. The highlight of the entire event was doubtlessly the joint unveiling of the "Massegraf" commemorative plaque by two former opponents, who actually fought here for over two weeks and luckily survived. U.S. veteran Pfc, Harry Harvey (90th U.S. Infantry Division) and German "Gefreiter" Erhard Mitzinnek (formerly 9th Volksgrenadierdivision) shook hands and hugged each other before addressing the attendance in two very emotional speeches. Both men were the true "heroes" of the day, as this was a unique ceremony – the first of its kind in Luxembourg and an excellent prelude for the many 60th anniversary-related commemorations that will take place in Luxembourg over the coming months.



Veterans Harry Harvey(right), (90th U.S. Infantry division) and Erhard Mitzinnek (left) (9th Volksgrenadierdivision) after unveiling the memorial plaque dedicated to all soldiers, killed in the Schumanns Eck forest.

The trail can be visited any time of the year. The start is located some 300 meters from the NLM Memorial. Take the first way to the right on the main road from Schumanns Eck crossroads in direction of Bastogne and follow the markers in the woods. Additional information can be obtained from the Wiltz Tourist board:

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