

Historial de la Grande Guerre Museum of the Great War

Péronne < Somme < Picardie



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Press Kit

Presentation of the Historial

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The Historial de la Grande Guerre

It is within the calling of The Historial de la Grande Guerre to situate the specific nature of the bloodiest battle of the First World War in the overall context of the conflict. By way of comparison, the Battle of Verdun caused the lost (dead, wounded, missing) of 337,000 Germans and 362,000 Frenchmen. The losses at the Battle of the Somme totalled 400,000 for the British, 335,000 for the Germans and 200,000 for the French.

The idea of creating a museum devoted to the 1914-1918 war originated with the Somme County Council in 1986. The project was envisioned in the context of the 70th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, which involved combatants from more than twenty nations of the world at that time. The museum was inaugurated on 16 July 1992. The Corbusier-inspired architecture of the white concrete structure designed by Henri Edouard Ciriani is subtly built onto the brick château through which visitors enter. The Historial de la Grande Guerre was selected among the twenty 'Major Cultural Projects in France' of the time for the quality of its architecture.

The interior architecture and the museography chosen for the five main rooms illustrate at once life at the front and behind the lines. The weapons and military gear are displayed in the centre of the rooms: placed in shallow pits on the floor, it stresses the common suffering of the combatants.

This recent trilingual (English, French, German) museum is neither a memorial nor a military museum but a museum of mentalities which seeks to show how the cultural representations of combatants and civilians were drastically modified by the war. On the very sites of the Battle of the Somme in 1916 and the Battle of Picardy in 1918, the Historial de la Grande Guerre attempts to provide keys for understanding these events in all their dimensions and in so doing, to encourage reflection on the consequences of these battles and the material traces, which survive today.



The Thiepval Visitor Centre

Thiepval was one of the main theatres of the Battle of the Somme, where some 1,300,000 persons lost their lives. The Thiepval Memorial was inaugurated in 1932 to commemorate the loss of more than 73,000 Commonwealth soldiers who died without graves. Today it is the most important British war memorial in the world, with over 160,000 visitors each year.

On 24 September 2004, the Historial de la Grande Guerre, the Somme County Council and the Thiepval Project inaugurated the Thiepval Visitor Centre. Intended to inform visitors who wish to learn more about the Battle of the Somme and the Great War, it houses a permanent trilingual exhibition of texts, photos and videos as well as a bookshop.

Free entrance, trilingual (French, English and German) exhibition, bookshop, rest area

Rue de l'Ancre - 80300 Thiepval

T. +33 (0)3 22 74 60 47 - F. +33 (0)3 22 74 65 44 thiepval@historial.org

Open everyday from 10 am to 5 pm

Annual 15 days closure around Christmas and New Year's Day

The museum: some references

Opening of the museum

1st August 1992

President

Pierre Linéatte

Director

Guillaume de Fonclare

Curator

Marie-Pascale Prévost-Bault

Historical discourse

International Research Centre of the Historial de la Grande Guerre

- Jean-Jacques Becker, professor emeritus, University of Paris X-Nanterre
- Annette Becker, lecturer, University of Lille III
- Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, academic dean, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris
- Gerd Krumeich, professor, University of Düsseldorf
- Jay Winter, professor, University of Yale

Investment

15 M€

- Department of the Somme (8,5 M€)
- FEDER (European funds) (2,5 M€)
- Ministry of Culture & Department of Education (2 M€)
- Picardie Region (2 M€)

Architect

Henri-Edouard Ciriani

Museography

Repérages SARL (architects)

Sery-Bertrand (construction)

Lichtdesign (lighting)

CEM (audiovisual system)

Studio Mutterer (muséography)

Conception

Repérages (Adeline Rispal) - www.reperages.com

Filmography

Laurent Veray

Total surface

4 236 m²

Total surface of exposition

1800 m²

Five rooms for permanent exhibition

Two rooms for temporary exhibition (180 m² & 50 m²)

Practical Information

Opening hours	Daily from 10 am to 6 pm including Sundays and holidays Closed every year from mid-December to mid-January
Information	Phone +33 (0)3 22 83 14 18 Fax +33 (0)3 22 83 54 18 info@historial.org www.historial.org
Site	Historial de la Grande Guerre Château de Péronne - BP 20063 F. 80201 Péronne cedex
How to come to the Historial	<u>By car</u> From Paris or Lille: A 1, exit 13 or 13.1 From Amiens or Saint-Quentin: A 29 <u>By train</u> Stations TGV Haute-Picardie, Saint-Quentin or Amiens
Distances	50 kms from Amiens 85 kms from Lille 135 kms from Paris 145 kms from Brussels
Admission fees	Individuals Adults.....7, 50€ Over 606, 20€ Children, students, teachers3, 80€ Groups Adults guided tour (reservation required)7, 00€ Students (reservation required)3, 20€

Reduced fees require proof of status.

The Historial reserves the right to modify its admission fees and opening hours without prior notice.

Audio-guide for the permanent exhibition

An audio-guide in three languages (French, English and German) is provided free of charge with the purchase of an individual admission ticket for the museum. The guide offers commentaries on the objects in our collection (uniforms, archives, trench crafts) and develops the main themes of the exhibition design, which correspond to the different periods in the history of the Great War. The commentaries, accessible to all age groups, have been conceived and read by the historians of the Historical International Research Centre. The guide, who lasts a total of 2 hours and 20 minutes, constitutes an indisputable complement to the museum visit, whether it is used sporadically or throughout the permanent exhibition. Available since March 2004, the audio-guide has had an undeniable success with the public: 75 percent of individual visitors use it and express their overall satisfaction.

National “Tourism & Handicap” label

The Historial de la Grande Guerre is now accredited with the national “*Tourism & Handicap*” label for its accessibility to persons with physical, mental or hearing disabilities. Ninety percent of visitors with reduced mobility have already expressed their satisfaction with the access provided at the Historial.

The obtaining of this label marks the Historial’s commitment to encouraging the spread of tourism and leisure activities for disabled persons within larger aim of addressing its services to the broadest possible public.

The Video room

Since July 2006, the video room presents 30 minutes short measuring devoted to the Battle of the Somme (July 1 - November 1916). On a large screen and in triptych form, library films and evidences of soldiers alternate in a confrontation of representations relative to the three belligerents.

The Café du Musée

A relaxing café overlooking the Cam Pond. Hot and cold beverages and snacks are available, with seating indoors or on the terrace.

A 150-seat restaurant for groups, serving a Picardy-style luncheon in the château's vaulted dining room. The restaurant is also available for seminars or dinners.

The bookstore

The international bookstore-gift shop presents over 500 publications on literary, historical, artistic and military aspects of the First World War. It also features posters, postcards, videos, periodicals, comics, tin soldiers, scale models and other memorabilia. It also proposes you a selection of books in English and in Deutsch, and videos

Documentation Centre

The Documentation Centre is open by appointment from Monday to Friday (9 am to noon and 2 pm to 5 pm). Entry is free of charge and includes access to archives, photographs, postcards, brochures and other documents on the Great War. Depending on the nature of the research involved, it is recommended to contact the Centre in advance so that the curatorial department can prepare the necessary materials for consultation.

The Documentation Centre provides an international approach to the Great War through a library of more than 4,000 books, pamphlets and bound periodicals illustrating the military, political and cultural history of the war over the 1910-1930 periods.

Educational Outreach Department

The Educational Outreach Department is composed of a multidisciplinary team of educators (high school teachers in literature, fine arts, German, English, history and geography, as well as elementary school teachers). It offers an introduction to the Historial through pedagogical tools, varied approaches and teacher training.

International Research Centre

The advisory committee of historians responsible for elaborating the programme of the Historial has given rise to an international Research Centre, operating independently of the museum. This association ensures the promotion of historical research on the First World War through different means: organisation of international conferences, Publications, Fellowships.

Historial de la Grande Guerre

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Thiepval Visitor Centre

thiepval@historial.org

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F-80300 Thiepval

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Temporary exhibitions

The cultural programming takes part in the life of the museum. It is made up mainly of temporary exposures accompanied by conferences, concerts, spectacles and editions. These activities, sometimes in collaboration with other institutions, are carried out in the respect of the historical speech and the principle specialist in comparative literature of the permanent exposure. Tools for mediation are proposed to the visitors for the temporary exposures (teaching folders, files or plates, audio-guides...). We carry out on average four exhibitions per year whose entry is free. Original and new, the subjects whom they tackle are always in bond with the topic of the war. Some examples:

Historic exhibitions

- Camouflages (1997)
- De Gaulle soldat, 1914-1918 (1999)
- Images de guerre, images de paix (1999)
- Tapis de guerre afghans (2000)
- Les cimetières allemands de la Grande Guerre, photographies d'Edward Whittaker (2002)
- Les juifs dans la Grande Guerre (2002)
- Les enfants dans la Grande Guerre (2003)
- Les médailles dans la Grande Guerre (2004)
- 1916 - La bataille de la Somme / un espace mondial (2006)
- Wake up America ! Les affiches américaines (2007)
- La Guerre des Animaux, 1914-1918 (2007)

Artistic exhibitions

- Ben et Combas, entre deux guerres (1998)
- Masson - Massacres (2001)
- De Charles-Édouard Jeanneret vers Le Corbusier, 1914-1925 (2001)
- Arman Armé (2004)
- "Écrans" de Marie Herzog (2005)
- War in the Gulf - Michel LeBrun-Franzaroli (2008)
- L'Autre Allemagne : rêver la paix 1914-1924 (2008)

Literary exhibitions

- Ernst Jünger par François Lagarde, photographe (1996)
- Les fantômes du Chemin des Dames - Le presbytère d'Yves Gibeau, photographies de Gérard Rondeau (2003)
- Apollinaire au feu (2005)

The **Historial de la Grande Guerre** publishes catalogues of exhibition in partnership with diffusers on a new subject of scientific quality.

Some examples:

- *L'Autre Allemagne : rêver la paix (1914-1924)*
Milan : 5 Continents ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2008.
- *War in the Gulf - Michel LeBrun-Franzaroli*
Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2008.
- *La Guerre des Animaux, 1914-1918*
Paris : Somogy ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2007.
- *1916 - La bataille de la Somme*
Paris: Somogy ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2006.
- *Apollinaire au feu*
Paris: RMN ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2005.
- *Arman armé*
Milan: 5 Continents ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2004.
- *Paul Landowski. La pierre d'éternité*
Paris: Somogy ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2004.
- *Les Enfants dans la Grande Guerre*
Péronne: Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2003.
- *Les Juifs dans la Grande Guerre*
Péronne: Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2002.
- *Des Américaines en Picardie. Au service de la France dévastée, 1917-1924*
Paris: RMN ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2002.
- *La Guerre des Animaux, 1914-1918*

... **Collaborates and support of the editions of works or CD:**

- *Larousse de la Première Guerre mondiale (2007)*
- *L'Ennemi*
Paris: Sarbacane, 2007.
- *Laurent Pensa, brancardier-musicien au 31^e R.I. : un DVD, un cdérom et un site internet*
Amiens: CRDP ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2006.
- *La Somme, paysages de la Grande Guerre*
Paris: Bernard Giovanangeli Editeur, Les champs de la mémoire ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2006.
- *Les Carnets de Marc Bloch*
Paris: Gallimard, 2006.
- *La Grande Guerre de 1914-1918 en relief*
(éd. limitée). Paris: éd. Les Arènes ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2004.
- Bill CARROTHERS. *Armistice 1918*
Paris : Sketch Studio ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2004. Coffret 2 CD.
- *L'Historial de la Grande Guerre et le Circuit du Souvenir*
Tournai: Renaissance du Livre, 2000.
- *Guide des cimetières militaires en France*
Paris: Le cherche midi ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 1999.
- *Paroles de Poilus. Lettres et carnets du front 1914-1918*
Paris: Frémeaux ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 1999. Coffret 3 CD.

... **Takes part in the works carried out by the historians of the International Research Centre:**

- *L'Encyclopédie de la Grande Guerre*
Sous la direction de Jean-Jacques BECKER et Stéphane AUDOIN-ROUZEAU. Paris : Bayard, 2004.
- *Der Krieg - Otto Dix*
Annette BECKER, Philippe DAGEN. Paris : Édition 5 Continents ; Péronne : Historial de la Grande Guerre, 2003.

They talked about the Historial...

In the Gold Book

Nicht Heroisiert [no boast]
Nicht Erniedrigt [no mortify]
Très ému [very moved]
Ernst Jünger (writer)
(1st August 1992)

Quelle découverte... voilà un lien que tous les élèves, tous les citoyens devraient connaître, afin de se rendre compte que l'histoire ce n'est pas « c'était » mais « c'est ».

Bertrand Tavernier (filmmaker)
(12 March 1997)

Votre musée est une réussite pour conserver le devoir de mémoire. Un fils de poilu 14/18.
Commandant Morin (2003)

The museum is wonderful. I honour my grandfather who fought for 22 years on the Somme and survived. I hope my children remember the terrible cost of war !
Alison Lambert, Perth - Australia (2004)

Je trouve que le musée est très bien. Ça explique bien aux enfants.
Paul, 10 years old (2006)



Jacques Tardi (drawer)

In the Press

Le Point (15 juillet 2004) dossier spécial « 14-18 la guerre barbare »

« *L'Historial de la Grande Guerre à Péronne est un vaste musée, témoin des mentalités et de la vie quotidienne pendant la guerre. A ne pas manquer.* »

Télérama (10 novembre 2004) « 14-18 la guerre sans fin »

« *...Comment passer de l'émotion à la réflexion ? L'Historial de la Grande Guerre de Péronne offre à cet égard un dispositif exemplaire.* »

Prisma (26 August 2006) "tod an der Somme"

« *Das Historial will zudem ein Ort sein, an dem Franzosen, Engländer und Deutsche zusammenfinden, um den Wahnsinn einer, zumindest in Mitteleuropa, untergegangenen Epoche zu ergründen.* »

Guide Que faire en... ? Picardie (2007)

« *L'Historial de la Grande Guerre est une référence pour le tourisme de mémoire et la compréhension de cette période troublée de l'Histoire (...). Un émouvant parcours initiatique !* »

Picardie, La Gazette (mars 2007)

« *Cette mine de renseignements fait que l'Historial est un formidable outil du développement local, générateur de retombées touristiques et économiques.* »

Daily Telegraph (23 June 2007) « Catch this »

« *If you driving south to Paris or Reims from Calais this summer, it's worth stopping off at the Somme town of Peronne, where a fascinating exhibition opens next Saturday at the Historial de la Grande Guerre Museum.* »

Visitors at the Historial de la Grande Guerre

Entries in 2008 : 80 641 visiteurs

Entries in 2007: 74,000 visitors

Entries in 2006: 85,500 visitors

Entries in 2005: 74,000 visitors

Entries in 2004: 77,000 visitors

Percentage

45 % visitors from school groups

40 % individual visitors

15 % visitors from adult groups

Individuals

75 % adults

10 % children (under 18)

15 % seniors

Seniors: 20 % visitors of the Historial

15 % group visits

5 % individual visits

Nationalities

73 % French

27 %

foreigners

15 %

Great Britain

6 %

Belgium and Netherlands

9 %

Others (Germany, North America, Australia and other countries)

At Thiepval

The Visitors Centre (open in 2004)

Entries in 2007: 152,000 visitors

Entries in 2006: 155,500 visitors

Entries in 2005: 107,200 visitors

Entries in 2004: 100,000 visitors

Nationalities

90 % from Great Britain

200,000 visitors visit every year the Thiepval Memorial

Chronology of the First World War in the Somme

1914

- 28-30 August Battles in the Somme during the French retreat
22-27 September Battles of the 'race to the sea' taking place at the headwaters of the Avre River to the town of Albert

1915

- 19 May Because of the German attack on Verdun, Joffre reduces the French participation in the anticipated Battle of the Somme
24 June Beginning of artillery preparation.
29 June The attack is postponed because of rain and inadequate preparation.
1 July Beginning of the offensive. Total failure in the North, more success in the South: the British take Mametz and Montauban. The French advance.
14 July 2nd major assault: the British attack the 2nd German line on a more limited front. The South Africans attack at Delville Wood. Battle of attrition.
23 July British attack from Guillemont to Pozières, captured by the Australians two days later.
3 September General Allied attack from the Ancre River to Chilly. The British take Guillemont, the French, Soyécourt.
5 September The Canadians relieve the Australians in front of Mouquet Farm.
9 September The 16th Irish division takes Ginchy for good.
15 September Third 'big push' with the first appearance of tanks in the battle between Courcellette and Flers.
26 September Beginning of a general Franco-British offensive from Martinpuich to the Somme River. Thiepval and Combles in German hands.
7 October Allied offensive from Courcellette to Bouchavesnes. The British take over Le Sars. Rain slows down the troop advance. War of attrition.
18 November End of the offensive in the Somme.

1917

- 16 March Voluntary German retreat to the Hindenburg line after systematically destroying the abandoned areas.

1918

- 21 March German offensive between Arras and La Fère.
26 March General Foch is named co-ordinator of the Allied armies at Doullens.
4 April German advance halted north of the Ancre, on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, and in the South after the capture of Montdidier and Grivesnes.
19 July Preparatory Australian attack on the town of Hamel.
8 August The 'black day of the German army' marks the beginning of the Allied counter-offensive.
2 September Péronne is totally recaptured by the Allies.

On the trail of the Great War in the Somme

Visiting the battlefields

1st July 1916 remains a date without equivalent in British memory: this was the bloodiest day in the entire history of the British army, with 20,000 killed and nearly 60,000 losses (killed, wounded, and missing). In the collective memory, it represents both a test of British valour and one of the most extensive and useless tragedies. Each village name in the Somme is now mentally associated with a town or region in the United Kingdom which sent combatants there.

The battlefields can be visited through a marked itinerary connecting the two towns symbolising the Great War in the Somme: Albert, where the British troops were stationed, and Péronne, then occupied by the Germans. Panels displaying the poppy, a flower of the Somme, which has become the emblem of British remembrance, can recognise this 'Circuit of Remembrance'. It is possible to obtain brochures and books detailing the different battle sites of the Somme and the events, which took place there. Guided visits are also available for groups. The southern part of the circuit concerns the French sector while the north concerns the British.

The circuit is thus punctuated with stopping places revealing the memory of the Great War: museums, major memorials, vestiges of battles and cemeteries. Among them are Thiepval, the most important Franco-British memorial in the world, which is inscribed with the 73,367 names of soldiers who died without known tombs. A Visitors Centre offers key information necessary for understanding the history of Thiepval during the First World War. A few kilometres away, other memory sites - Irish, Newfoundland, Australian, South African, German and French - may be visited.

Cemeteries

A particular place must be reserved for a specific form of remembrance tourism, namely the visit of a cemetery to find a relative's tomb. It is here that private and public spheres come together in the processes of mourning and commemoration. By the late 1920s, the cemeteries were visited more than the actual battlefields, while the construction of the cemeteries themselves was ending. Today, the revival of interest - often among the generation of the grandchildren - for the Great War, which was long overshadowed by the Second World War, is creating an increase in the number of cemetery visitors.

The 14 German, 19 French and 410 British cemeteries of the Somme may easily be distinguished:

- Run by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge [¹], the German cemeteries may be recognised by their black crosses, in cast iron or stone, often in the middle of a tree-lined park.
- Their white crosses and a flagpole flying the French flag distinguish the French cemeteries. There is always an ossuary [²].
- The British cemeteries are quite numerous along the front because it was decided to bury the bodies as close as possible to the place where the soldiers were killed. There were few mass graves, as was the case for the French and the Germans. The headstones of the British soldiers are accompanied by the "Cross of sacrifice" when there are more than 40 tombs and the "Stone of Remembrance" when there are more than 1,000 [³].

Whatever the nationality of the cemetery, it reflects the soldiers' conditions of life and death through its location, composition, typical or original inscriptions, or its history. They attest to their respective societies' attempts, at the end of the war, to confront a mass bereavement whose consequences we have not yet fully grasped.

[¹] The German War graves Agency, created in 1919, is responsible for inventorying, preserving and maintaining the tombs of German soldiers abroad. Through its website, the organisation makes it possible to locate a particular soldier's tomb: <<http://www.volkbund.de>>

[²] The Ministry of Defence handles the upkeep of the French burial sites. The files of French soldiers declared "Morts pour la France" (killed in action) are available on <<http://www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr>>

[³] The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, created in 1917, runs all British cemeteries throughout the world <<http://www.cwgc.org>>