

Ablain-Saint-Nazaire Souchez







The chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette prior to 1914. Etching of Arthur Mayeur.

Situated within the municipality of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire and overlooking the territory of the Lens-Liévin Conurbation, the French national necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette is a place that is eminently symbolic of the Great War in the Artois region. Occupying a strategic position on the front for four long years and the stage of bloody fighting, at the end of the conflict the hill of Lorette was chosen as the site for a military necropolis which was to become the biggest in France. The recognition paid to soldiers fallen in battle was further augmented by the construction of a chapel and a lantern tower within the cemetery. On the occasion of the centenary of the Great War, the site has been enhanced thanks to the efforts of the Government. the Regional Council of the Nord-Pasde-Calais, the Pas-de-Calais County Council and the Conurbation Committee of Lens-Liévin. In addition to the development of the edge of the site, two major projects have been brought to fruition: the International Memorial of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette opposite the necropolis and Lens '14-18 - Centre d'Histoire Guerre et Paix (Centre for the History of War and Peace) in Souchez. These initiatives reflect the will of the public authorities to contribute to the work of remembrance, for the younger generations in particular, and also to strengthen the region's attractiveness as a centre for remembrance tourism at national and international level.

# **Sylvain Robert**

Président of the Lens-Liévin Conurbation Committee Mayor of Lens



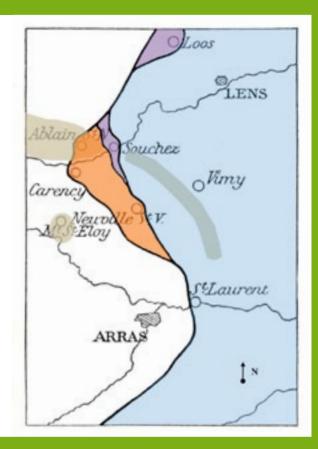
Simplified map of the ebb and flow of the front in Artois during 1915



Zone occupied by the German Army

Zone retaken by the French Army during the offensive of May 1915

Zone retaken by the French and British Armies during the offensive of September 1915



# 3 August 1914

Germany declares war on France.

September – October 1914 The Race to the Sea. Lens is occupied from 4

Winter 1914
First Battle of Artois.

# 9 May 1915

The Second Battle of Artois is launched. The French Army recaptures the plateau of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

# 25 September 1915

The Third Battle of Artois is launched.
A diversionary battle at Loosen-Gohelle launched by the British Army.

### 1916

The French Army withdraws from the Artois Front in order to concentrate on the front zone in the departments of Eastern France. The British Army is tasked with managing the front in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais.

# March - April 1917

The Germans order the mass evacuation to Belgium of civilians remaining within the territory.

### 9 April - 15 May 1917 Battle of Arras.

Vimy Ridge is captured by the Canadians.

# 10 - 12 October 1918

Liberation of the Lens-Liévin sector.



Ablain-Saint-Nazaire and the plateau of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette prior to 1914.

The ruins of the town hall and bell tower of Arras in late 1915.

# Collective conscience frequently associates the 1914-1918 War with the Chemin des Dames (Aisne) or Verdun (Meuse) sites. The Battles of Artois are generally less well known. Yet the front between Lens and Arras was of enormous strategic importance, first to the French Command and then to the British, and the battles waged here were no less bloody than those fought in other departments. This is seen in the nicknames given to the hill of Lorette by soldiers on both the French and German sides - « la colline aux 100000 morts » (the hill of the 100,000 dead) and « Totenhügel » (the hill of the dead).

### The Race to the Sea

At the outbreak of the War, the German Army applied its battle plan, known as the «Schlieffen Plan», and crossed neutral Belgium with the objective of advancing on the French capital. French victory at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914 led to Paris being spared and triggered the episode known as the « Race to the Sea ». During this period, the German Army and the French and British armed forces attempted to outflank one another by means of encirclement manoeuvres heading northwards. The opposing troops thus confronted one another as they moved progressively towards Belgium and the North Sea through the regions of Oise, the Somme and the Pas-de-Calais, where the

town of Arras constituted a particular friction point.

# The capture of the plateau of Lorette

During the night of 4 to 5 October 1914, the troops of the Sixth German Army entered Lens and established a foothold on the plateau of Lorette. This manoeuvre was made all the more easy by the fact that the French had allowed a breach to open between Carency and Grenay. With this, the Germans were at the gates of Arras. The French fought fiercely in defence of the town which was devastated by shell bombardments. In the face of the French resistance, the Germans eventually abandoned the attack and withdrew to the heights of the Artois hills. This marked the start of the War of Positions. During the months

of October and November 1914, the French and Germans confronted one another in a series of attacks and counterattacks designed to « gnaw » at the enemy positions. At this time, the first trenches remained rudimentary but the better-equipped German troops rapidly constructed strong defensive lines. The front then stabilised along a north-south axis which ran through the hill of Lorette and Vimy Ridge, both occupied by the Germans. At this time, these anchor points constituted a primary objective which was doggedly targeted by the French command with the launch of a succession of major offensives between October 1914 and October 1915. Called the « Battles of Arras », these confrontations were to take a particularly heavy toll.



Reconstruction of an assault by French soldiers at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and Ablain-Saint-Nazaire during the bombardment. Watercolour by François Flameng, May 1915.

### The First Battle of Artois

On 17 December 1914, an operation was launched at the initiative of General Joffre, the Commander-in-Chief of the French Army, who intended to reinstate mobile warfare along the entire Western Front, The 10th Army commanded by General de Maud'huv moved onto the attack on the plateau of Lorette and in the village of Carency, but without success. Overwhelmed by particularly harsh winter conditions, the soldiers not only had to battle against enemy fire but also against the cold, the rain, the snow and, above all, the sticky clay mud which engulfed the dead and living alike. The two armies spent the late winter consolidating and organising their positions, although amid ongoing combat.

The beginning of 1915 was marked by the war of mines waged by the combatants in the Carency sector in particular. Resulting in heavy losses, this technique consisted in destroying enemy trenches by digging underground tunnels in which explosive charges were laid.

# The plateau of Lorette, a critical topography

The hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette lies at the eastern end of the Artois hills. Rising to 165 m above sea level, it features a gentle chalky slope on its north-eastern side and a series of sharply sloped spurs to the south.



At the foot of this hill there are small valleys hollowed out by the Saint-Nazaire and Carency rivers. This dominant position offers an exceptional outlook over the surrounding area: towards the mining basin to the north, as far as Lille, and even the heights of Flanders in clear weather, towards

the woods of Givenchy-en-Gohelle and Vimy Ridge to the east and towards the ancient Abbey of Mont-Saint-Eloi and the Arras road to the south-east. So the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette would have constituted a strategic promontory for any of the warring sides that controlled it.

Map of the organisation of the French Army during the offensive of May 1915.

- Position of the 21st Army Corps of the French Army
- Position of the 33<sup>rd</sup>
  Army Corps of the
  French Army

# The Second Battle of Artois

In the early spring of 1915, General Ioffre decided on a new major offensive to be launched in May. It was necessary at all costs to retake the plateau of Lorette and Vimy Ridge, in order to open the route to the North and the Belgian border. In preparation for this attack, the French undertook significant work to reinforce their trenches: the establishment of a network of parallel combat lines connected by numerous communication galleries, the installation of command posts, first-aid stations, ammunition stores, a variety of equipment, water, provisions, the creation of a buried telephone network etc. Very detailed reconnaissance of the terrain was performed by means of aerial photographs.



A week before the assault. fire from 1,125 guns pounded the German lines. The attack was launched on 9 May along a front extending almost 20 kilometres. At 06:00 hours, the French artillery entered the action. At 10:00 hours, the infantry attacked. The 33rdArmy Corp\* commanded by General Pétain, the Moroccan Division and the Legionnaires attacked in the Neuville-Saint-Vaast sector and made a remarkable breakthrough towards Vimy Ridge, but it could not be sustained due to a lack of reinforcements. On the plateau of Lorette, the soldiers of the 21st Army Corps commanded by General Maistre crashed against the German lines

which were defended by a formidable «fortress». The soldiers fought handto-hand, with grenades and bayonets. After the fierce fighting, the plateau of Lorette was retaken on 12 May, as were the village of Carency and part of the village of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire. The Germans were pushed back to the south-eastern slopes of the hill, which were in turn taken by the French on 22 May. The village of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire was completely retaken on 28 and 29 May after an intense battle, waged on the municipality's cemetery in particular. Gradually, the troops became exhausted and the fighting became bogged down around Souchez.

In the face of German resistance, General Foch, the Commander of the Armies of the North, finally decided to call a halt to the offensive on 24 June. When the results were assessed, reality set in. Between 9 May and 25 June, to retake just 20 km<sup>2</sup>, no fewer than 104,000 French soldiers had been killed, posted missing, wounded or taken prisoner. On the German side, the positions on Vimy Ridge had been protected but at the price of heavy losses, with 75,000 men killed, wounded or taken prisoner.



The park of the Château du Carieul in Souchez in late 1915.

French soldiers in ruined houses in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire.

### The Third Battle of Artois

The summer of 1915 were on with no change to the front, but the opposing armies engaged in a constant artillery battle with the massive deployment of mortars, nicknamed «crapouillots» (little toads) by the French soldiers and «Minenwerfer» by the Germans. In September 1915, the French High Command decided once again to launch a major coordinated attack in Champagne and Artois. After the efforts expended in May, the essential objective was to lift the «block» at Souchez once and for all, as it commanded the main access to Lens, and to establish a foothold on Vimy Ridge. The 10th French Army was mobilised once again. At the same time, it was supported by British forces in the Loos-en-Gohelle sector.

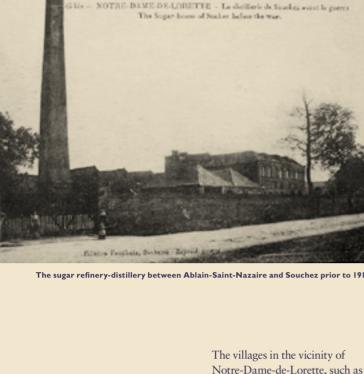
The assault began on 25 September. The 21st and 33rd Army Corps advanced towards Souchez. Their progress was hampered by the presence of marshes and by asphyxiating shells fired from German gun positions in Angres and Liévin. With grenade fire raining down, a fierce battle was engaged in the cemetery of Souchez. The French troops ultimately retook the villages of Givenchy and Souchez (26 September) and advanced as far as Hill 119 on Vimy Ridge. This remained in German hands, however, and was only retaken in April 1917 by the Canadians during the Battle of Arras.

# The song of Craonne

Refrain:
Good-bye to life,
good-bye to love,
Farewell all women
It's all over now, we've
had it for good
With this awful war
It's in Craonne, up
on the plateau
That we're leaving our skins
Cause we've all been
sentenced to die
We're the ones that
they're sacrificing

The song of Craonne (named after the village of Craonne in the Aisne) is notable for having been taken up by French soldiers during the mutinies that followed the Chemin des Dames offensive

in 1917. It originated on the plateau of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and included the lyrics: C'est à Lorette, sur le plateau (It was at Lorette, on the plateau...). Anonymously composed, it was passed on orally and there are a number This song was censored during the War because of its dissenting and antimilitaristic sentiment. The lyrics were published for the first time in 1919 by Raymond Lefebyre and later by Paul Vaillant-Couturier. The melody is inspired by the tune of a much lighter song, «Bonsoir M'amour» (Goodnight my love), by Karl Ditan to the words of Raoul Le Peltier and the music of Adelmar Sablon.





The sugar refinery-distillery between Ablain-Saint-Nazaire and Souchez prior to 1914.

The same sugar refinery-distillery after the battles of 1915.

Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, Carency and Souchez, suffered the full force of battle. In this sector, those of the population who had not fled at the invasion of August 1914 were evacuated by the Germans in early 1915. The latter commandeered the dwellings and carried out significant modifications: the houses were linked together by means of underground communication tunnels or by trenches. The cellars were shored up and reinforced with layers of concrete. Holes were cut into the walls for machine gun emplacements. These villages thus came to

form a strong defensive

with strategic bulwarks,

system interspersed

like the ruins of the

sugar refinery-distillery standing between Ablain-Saint-Nazaire and Souchez, which the Germans converted into a veritable fortress. In addition, the surrounding terrain was flooded in order to impede the enemy's advance. Other systems completed the German defensive line, such as at Angres and Liévin where long-range guns were installed to bombard the French trenches dug into the hill of Lorette.



### The church of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire

With its 34 m-high tower, the village church was used by German soldiers as an observation post and thus became a target for the French and British artillery in 1914 and 1915. Built by Jacques Le Caron, the architect of the bell tower of Arras, the building dates back to the sixteenth century. With its tall windows and richly sculpted portal on the south facade, this church was regarded as a jewel of flamboyant Gothic style. Listed as a Historic Monument in 1908, the building was left in its devastated state after the War as symbolic testimony to the terrible battles waged in Artois.



The burial of a French soldier in the Bully-Grenay sector on 26 November 1915.

Temporary cemetery close to Notre-Dame-de-Lorette (Bouvigny Wood) in 1917.

### Temporary cemeteries

During the conflict, temporary cemeteries were established by the warring sides, either in the immediate vicinity of the front or further back, close to the field hospitals where many wounded men died. In occupied territory, as at Lens, the German authorities established cemeteries that demonstrated real concern for aesthetics and were manifestly built to last. France and the United Kingdom opted for the collective burial of bodies in mass graves: up to 100 bodies for the French and in groups of six for the British, From the outset, the Germans implemented the principal of individual resting places.

# The national programmes

In the aftermath of the War, each nation decided to establish permanent cemeteries along differing lines. France and Germany maintained the principle of grouping combatants together in large burial grounds while the British government preferred to bury soldiers as close as possible to the place where they had fallen. This explains the numerous Commonwealth cemeteries scattered across today's landscape, such as the Cabaret Rouge cemetery in Souchez or the Villers Station cemetery in Villers-au-Bois.

# Laws and decrees passed by the French government

An initial law was voted on 29 December 1915 to govern the creation of burial places for the French and Allied Armies, On 28 June 1922, this was extended to include German graves. According to the Law of 31 July 1920, the cemeteries are kept and maintained at the expense of the Nation. However, municipalities and associations that wish to do so can perform these duties on behalf of the State under a special agreement. In return, they receive a set sum fixed by the Decree of 25 September 1920 which establishes the principle of an individual and uniform monument for each soldier (a headstone or cross) bearing

the inscription « Mort pour la France » (Fallen for France). It contains instructions specifying arrangements for respecting the various religious beliefs: the headstones can bear a religious emblem and Muslim soldiers are buried in graves orientated south-west/north east, with the body lying on the right side and the face turned towards Mecca.

# The layout of French necropolises

The relatively simple layout reflects the availability of resources. The graves are arranged in rows, like troops on parade, and are treated identically. Their great number creates a mass effect emphasising the magnitude of the losses suffered, while their homogeneity symbolises



German funerary monument erected in Lens to the memory of the soldiers who fell at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.



Ceremony of 11 November 1920 in Paris. In front of the Pantheon, the tank carrying the heart of Gambetta and the 155 gun-carriage ready to receive the coffin of the Unknown Soldier.

the equality of all before death and self-sacrifice for the Patrie. These necropolises were maintained by the Ministry of War, now the Ministry of Defence, in coordination with the ONACVG (French National Office for Veterans and Victims of War).

# The British approach

The British cemeteries are managed by a body created as early as 1917, the Imperial War Graves Commission, renamed in 1960 the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)\*. The design and maintenance of these cemeteries follow a very precise set of specifications. The headstones are all identical and arranged according to a very meticulous plan. Particular attention is paid to the floral decoration of the graves and to tree pruning.

### The German cemeteries

The crowd at the inauguration of the

Lens war memorial in 1925.

In the first instance, these were managed by the French authorities who amalgamated a number of existing cemeteries. Yet a popular association, the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK)\*, had been created in 1919 but it was not authorised to undertake any activity on French territory until 1926. The German cemeteries are characterised by a marked sobriety and their design reflects the idea of communion between Man and Nature.

# The repatriation of bodies

Some families wished to bury their loved ones in their local graveyards, but this practice was relatively unusual as the exhumation of bodies was not permitted in France until 1920. Furthermore, the procedure

proved to be laborious and expensive, even with a State contribution to the cost. It was against this background that each municipality decided to honour their dead. Among the British, apart from the logistical and financial contingencies, spiritual convictions also mitigated against repatriation. As for the German soldiers, the French authorities refused to return the bodies to their families.

# The cult of the Unknown Soldier

With thousands of the dead

unable to be identified. many families were faced with the absence of a body. To pay tribute to these nameless heroes, the French State decided to honour an unknown soldier in a monument unveiled on 11 November 1920 under the Arc de Triomphe in did not take place until January 1921. This tomb was to become a symbol of national reverence. On the same day, the British government laid an unknown soldier to rest in Westminster Abbey in London. Other countries soon followed suit. However, in Germany the cult of the Unknown Soldier appeared somewhat later, at the instigation of Adolf Hitler.



One of the temporary cemeteries close to Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. In the background, the ruins of the church of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire.

The Association du Monument de Lorette. Seated in the centre, Bishop Julien with General Maistre on his left. Behind them, standing in a dark suit, the architect Louis-Marie Cordonnier.

# The beginnings of the necropolis

# A symbolic location

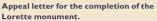
With its dominant position - but even more in the light of the magnitude of losses suffered here - since 1919 the site of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette has been regarded as a place of commemoration for the sacrifice of thousands of combatants who fell for their country. Created on the battlefield in 1915 and gradually expanded throughout the conflict, between 1920 and 1926 the initially small cemetery received the bodies of soldiers from over 150 battlefield cemeteries. in the Artois, Flanders, and Yser and on the Belgian coast. During this transfer phase, 12,800 bodies were returned to their families. 20,000 soldiers are buried in the necropolis, each in an individual grave, whilst 22,000 unidentified remains lie in eight ossuaries.

# The Association of the Monument of Lorette

Even before the War ended, two men who were particularly touched by the fate of the soldiers in Artois - Bishop Julien of Arras and General Maistre. former Commander of the 21st Army Corps responsible for capturing the plateau of Lorette in 1915 - proposed the idea of erecting a symbolic monument of remembrance on the hill of Lorette. Other figures soon came out in support this initiative and a first committee was set up. Bridging all political or religious divides, this committee was made up of members of the clergy, institutional leaders and prominent citizens, among them several mining company managers such as Louis Mercier, Managing Director of the Compagnie des Mines

de Béthune who fulfilled the role of Treasurer for a time. Under the high patronage of the President of France. the Archbishop of Paris and Marshalls Foch, Joffre and Pétain, in September 1920 the committee organised itself into a voluntary association as defined by the French Law of 1901 on non-profit making organisations. According to Article 1 of its statutes, its aim was established as: « the erection of a commemorative monument on the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, intended to perpetuate the memory of the tragic battles staged on this hill and the surrounding area during the Great War and to honour the memory of the soldiers who fell during these battles for the defence of the Patrie ». To bring this project to a







Appeal for the Lorette monument. Printed thank-you note.



The crowd moving up the Blanche Voie in Ablain-Saint-Nazaire for the event of 12 September 1920. In the background, the church in ruins.

successful conclusion, the association relied on public generosity and received donations and grants. On 12 September 1920, a major event was organised on the plateau of Lorette in order to launch a public appeal. A large procession of political, military and religious figures and members of numerous associations (colliery bands, gymnastics associations, associations of veterans and of the war wounded etc.) processed up the hill. Leaflets, postcards and medals were specially issued for the occasion. The event was widely reported in the press. On 30 September 1923, the amount of donations collected came to just over 1,490,000 francs. The initiative of the Association du Monument de Lorette was further bolstered by a Decree of 16 January

1924 whereby the State authorised the construction of a commemorative monument in the national necropolis.

# The original chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette

The creation of this chapel dates back to 1727 when Florent Guilbert, a painter from the parish of Ablain-Saint-Nazaire, undertook a pilgrimage to the sanctuary of Loreto in Italy (in the Province of Ancona). Miraculously healed, upon his return he had an oratory dedicated to Our Lady of Loreto (Notre-Dame-de-Lorette in French) built on the plateau overlooking Ablain-Saint-Nazaire. Destroyed in 1794, the chapel was rebuilt in 1815 and enlarged between 1870 and 1880.

It soon developed into a centre of pilgrimage and attracted large numbers of the faithful from across the region. Every year around 8 September – the festival of the nativity of the Virgin – novenas are recited (prayers said over nine successive days in the hope of obtaining a miracle). In 1914, the chapel consisted of a nave with a double transept occupying a surface area of approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>. The

style of its architecture was of Romanesque inspiration. With two identical portals, the main facade was dominated by a small bell turret. The building was completely destroyed during fighting on the plateau in 1915. Work on the esplanade carried out in 2014 in preparation for the construction of the Ring of Remembrance led to the uncovering of the building's foundations.





Initial project by Louis-Marie Cordonnier for the monument of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, drawing

# The soul of the project

A member of the Lorette committee since its creation, the architect Louis-Marie Cordonnier was tasked with drawing up the plans for the necropolis and for the monument envisaged by the association. Bishop Julien, who played a decisive role in defining the project, immediately made known his wish to reconstruct the chapel annihilated by the battles, a wish inherited from his predecessor Bishop Lobbedey.

# The three projects of Louis-Marie Cordonnier

The first project proposed a grandiose programme consisting of a chapel with a square ground plan covered by a dome rising to a height of 52 m, connected to a 76 m-high tower containing

a light. Inspired by ancient funerary practices, this « lantern for the dead » was intended to watch over the souls of the soldiers. The architectural group lies at the centre of a rectangle formed by aisles covered on three sides, like a camposanto\*, designed to hold the

Second project by Louis-Marie Cordonnier for the monument of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, watercolour drawing enhanced with gouache.







Third project by Louis-Marie Cordonnier for the monument of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, drawing.

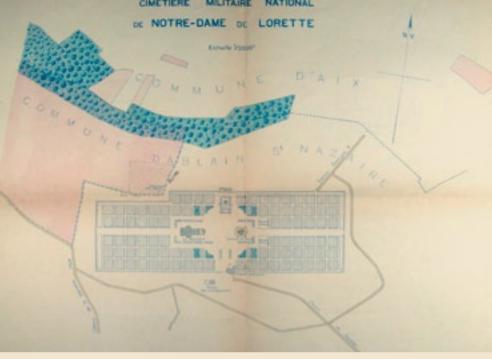
Louis-Marie Cordonnier in his office.

remains of unknown soldiers, be they French or Allied. Due to the excessive cost of this project, the association asked the architect to make some simplifications. Louis-Marie Cordonnier submitted a second, completely rethought project with a single central edifice formed by a chapel with a basilicatype plan, without a dome, and a bell tower fulfilling the role of «lantern for the dead». The covered aisles originally planned to hold the soldier's remains. were replaced by a number of ossuaries distributed across the necropolis. Since this second project still did not give satisfaction, it was reworked once again to culminate in a third and final proposal, in which the chapel and the lantern tower became

two separate structures. This choice reflects the secular character of the military necropolis, which was developed at State expense. Bishop Julien then suggested separating the chapel - a religious monument – from the lantern for the dead - a civil monument - for the sake of consistency with the 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State. The existence of the chapel in the realised project thus underscores the Christian dimension of the site and also makes the National Necropolis of Notre-Damede-Lorette unique among the other large French military necropolises, which have no religious buildings within their precincts.

# Louis-Marie Cordonnier (1854-1940)

Born in Haubourdin, Louis-Marie Cordonnier studied at the School of Fine Arts in Paris, where he developed a particular interest in the works of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and Charles Garnier, Verv active in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, he designed numerous public buildings, such as the town halls of Loos-Lez-Lille and Dunkirk, and was commissioned to design the seaside resort of Hardelot in 1906. He also won renown in 1913 with the construction of the Peace Palace at The Hague (Netherlands). After the First World War, he committed himself to the Reconstruction of the region, in Lille, Bailleul and Armentières in particular. In the Lens-Liévin sector, in addition to the Notre-Dame-de-Lorette project, he was retained between 1928 and 1930 by the Société des Mines de Lens mining company to design their Grands Bureaux (now the Jean Perrin Faculty of Science, Lens) and he was also responsible for a number of churches in mining communities. He died in 1940, leaving behind a distinct regionalist mark in the architectural landscape of the region.





The south-west sector of the necropolis where the Jewish and Muslim headstones are grouped (in the foreground and background respectively).

Site plan of the necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, drawn up in 1927.

Work started in 1920 with the development of the necropolis. The « first stones » of the lantern tower and chapel were laid on 19 June 1921 by Marshall Pétain and Bishop Julien at a massively-attended public event. The major structural work continued until 1927, followed by the installation of the decorative elements which lasted until the end of the 1930s. A variety of factors rendered the work laborious: the demining phase, the poor quality of the terrain carrying the risk of collapse, material transportation difficulties, the unfavourable

climate. During the work, a temporary chapel made from sheet metal was constructed nearby for the annual pilgrimages which had resumed in 1919. A registry office was also set up in order to provide information to the families who came here to mourn the dead. At the same time, the State instituted a land expropriation process which lasted from 1925 until 1938.

### The necropolis

The necropolis covers a 645 m by 200 m rectangle, equivalent to an area of approximately 13 hectares. Two perpendicular aisles dissect the plot into four sections in which the graves are aligned in a succession of rows. The procedure of burying the soldiers began in 1920, with the general principle of grouping the remains from a single battlefield into the same section of the cemetery. In the main, the headstones of soldiers of the Muslim and Jewish faiths were grouped together in south-western part of the cemetery.

### **Materials**

Initially made from wood, the crosses and grave markers were replaced by concrete headstones in the early 1930s. The architect strove to reconcile quality and thrift for the construction of the chapel and lantern tower. He used reinforced concrete, a light, solid and economic material, to form the framework for the two buildings, which was then covered with a facing of reconstituted stone. The quantities required for the project were impressive. No less than 700 m<sup>3</sup> of concrete were needed to construct the lantern tower and 1,800 m<sup>3</sup> for the chapel.



The lantern tower under construction.

The lantern tower.

The tower rises from square base measuring 12 metres each side. It is seated on a platform forming four flights of stairs. 52 metres high, it is formed by 5 superimposed platforms which are interconnected by staircases, each comprising a total of 200 steps. On the ground level, an arch-ceilinged vault, taking the external form of a monumental sarcophagus, was prepared to receive the coffins of 32 unknown soldiers. At the top of the tower, a colonnade covered by a conical roof protects the lantern whose light beam is visible in the surrounding countryside to a radius of 70 kilometres. Completely blind, the building has only one entrance located on the eastern facade. The four faces are treated identically: a large Latin cross dominates, with a War Cross engraved at

its centre. These two symbolic elements emphasise both the funerary and military character of the structure. Other motifs of foliage and stylised leaves are used in friezes, in particular to decorate the above-mentioned sarcophagus. Symbols borrowed from the vocabulary of military art can also be seen: laurel branches. wreaths of oak leaves, swords.

> Today, on the first level of the tower there is an interpretation area providing keys to an understanding of the site and its history.





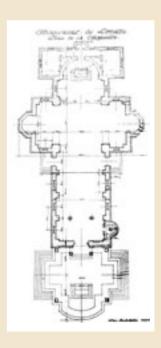
The chapel.

Detail of the tympanium above the entrance to the chapel.

# The chapel of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette

The ground plan of the building takes the form of a Latin cross, although with a transept witch does not protrude very far, only 30 metres wide in relation to the 14 metre-wide nave. 46 metres long, the nave has an cul-de-four apse\*, while each arm of the transept has an apsidiole\*. The main portal overlooks a broad esplanade on which a covered altar stands. for outdoor ceremonies. In the chevet, there are two sacristies, one on each side of the apse, which are connected by a corridor accessed via a small entrance. The entire building is lit by a single row of arched windows\*. At the transept crossing, a tambour\* pierced with small gemel windows\* supports

an octagonal dome rising to a height of 34 metres. The exterior decoration is rather sober: stylised geometric or vegetal motifs in bas-relief are used to skilfully enhance the architecture: friezes depicting waves half-way up the walls, semi-circular motifs lining the pediments. dentilled cornice etc. The cross - whether the War Cross or Greek cross - is a recurrent motif all over the building, as it is on the lantern tower. More significant figurative elements are nevertheless present: a Virgin and Child within in a mandorla\* dominates the triangular pediment of the main facade while the entrance door is topped by a tympanium\* showing two censerbearing angels. More discreet busts of angels decorate the gargoyles.





Le sarcophagus of the lantern tower.

The main facade of the chapel and the outdoor altar.

# The epitaph of the Lantern Tower

Each of the four faces of the Lantern Tower bears a cartouche containing engraved text. Three of them are quatrains composed by Bishop Julien himself. In words charged with emotion, he gives the visitor pause for thought and promotes a discourse touched by pacifism:

« It is the light tasked with preserving their memory Against the forgetful night falling around them: The lantern that is lit by the rays of their glory And sets one more star in the Heavens above France. Bones once animated by proud breath, Scattered limbs, nameless remains, human chaos, The dreadful confusion of a vast reliquary, God will know you, dust of heroes!

You pilgrims, who pass by their tombs, Climbing their Calvary and its blooddrenched pathways; Hear the clamour rising from the carnage: Peoples, unite! Men, be human! »



On the main facade, a dedication to the Virgin offers a reminder that the chapel received many donations, in particular from women who had lost a husband or son during the War:

The outdoor altar.

« Oh you, who, amid the pain Gave birth to Holy Hope To you this temple born of tears Offered up by the women of France »



Engraved on a cartouche embellished by a decorative frieze, a Latin phrase from the Book of Kings evokes through comparison the sacrifice made by the soldiers on the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette:

« Considera Israël pro his qui mortui sunt super excelsa tua vulnerati! »

« Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places! »









The dome of the chapel.

Detail of the lantern tower.

The Ossuary of Douaumont.

Although generally a proponent of regionalist style, from the outset Louis-Marie Cordonnier drew inspiration from Romano-Byzantine style\* in his design for the chapel and lantern tower of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. The example most representative of this style is undoubtedly the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur in Montmartre, designed by Paul Abadie and constructed between 1875 and 1912. The influence of this model also appears more marked in Cordonnier's original project, in which the dome is semi-circular and not octagonal in shape. Later, when Louis-Marie Cordonnier was designing the Basilica of Lisieux in the late 1920s, he borrowed largely from the plans he had prepared for

Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. The Romano-Byzantine style adopted by the architect here gives emphasis to the solemn character of the buildings, an effect reinforced by the whiteness of the stone used for the facade. However, a slight influence from Art Deco - a burgeoning movement in the 1920s - can be detected in the stylisation of the decorative motifs, such as those on the large Latin crosses decorating the four faces of the lantern tower, for example.

# The Ossuary of Douaumont

Erected close to the battlefields of Verdun (Meuse), the Ossuary of Douaumont shares some features with the National Necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. Created on the initiative of Bishop Ginisty of Verdun, known as the « soldiers' bishop », the ossuary adopts the shape of a lantern tower which dominates the cemetery. There is no place of worship, however. Larger than that of Lorette, the lantern tower of Douaumont is built over a 137 metre-long cloister which holds the remains of 130,000 French and German soldiers, lying in 46 vaults. Inaugurated in 1932, the ossuary is the work of the architects Léon Azéma. Max Edrei and Jacques Hardy.





The mosaic of the chapel apse.

The mosaics of the ossuary and the lantern tower.

The decorations were installed essentially from 1927 onwards, upon completion of the structural work, and progressed in line with the association's financial capacities until the end of the 1930s. As was his usual practice, Louis-Marie Cordonnier oversaw every detail of the work: he designed the furniture as well as the mosaic and tile motifs and personally hired major artists to execute this work. From the outset, the profusion of the decorations contrasted with the sobriety of the exterior.

### The mosaics

Omnipresent across the walls and vaulted ceilings, the mosaics clearly highlight the influence of Byzantine art, reinforced by the recurrent

use of gilded tesserae\*. In his instructions, Cordonnier detailed precisely the colours to be used and the mosaic: plaster base proportions to be observed, with the particular aim of minimising costs. The choir is decorated by a Christ in Majesty emerging from glory clouds, executed in bluish tones. and surrounded by four angels with spread wings. The Latin inscription Pax hominibus (Peace to mankind) appears below. Other figurative elements of the religious repertoire are visible: the four cardinal virtues (Temperance, Prudence, Justice and Fortitude) within the dome and the Four Evangelists (the ox, symbol of Saint Luke, the man, symbol of Saint Matthew, the lion of Saint

Mark and the eagle of Saint John) in the spendrels\*. Elsewhere mosaics with geometric or stylised motifs cover the walls and upper sections of the nave and apsidioles as well as the vaulted ceiling of the ossuary in the lantern tower.



Draft of the mosaic for the chapel apse, depicting Our Lady of Loreto.

# The Jean Gaudin workshops

All the mosaics, including those on some furniture elements, were made by the famous Gaudin Workshop in Paris. Félix (1851-1930, Jean (1879-1954) and Pierre (1908-1973) Gaudin were three generations of painters-glassworkers and mosaicists. Jean Gaudin was extremely active during the Reconstruction and worked on a number of projects, in the Pas-de-Calais and the Somme in particular. He also contributed to decorating the Basilica of Lisieux under the direction of Cordonnier.



Nave stained glass window depicting Saint Clotilde (s).



Nave stained glass window depicting Charlemagne (b).



Nave stained glass window depicting Saint Louis (d).

# The letters and numbers refer to the schematic plan of the chapel, shown on page 39.

For the design of the stained glass windows that were to decorate the building's 19 windows, Louis-Marie Cordonnier worked in collaboration with the artist Henri Pinta, who was tasked with designing the cartoons for the stained glass windows, and the well-known master glassmaker Charles Lorin, who produced and installed them. The stained glass windows of the chapel were mainly financed by donors whose names appear at the bottom of each window. They include anonymous donors as well as some prominent figures. The artists Lorin and Pinta themselves gifted the Saint Louis stained glass

window, in memory of their sons who had fallen for France during the War. Rather than the religious themes generally illustrated in places of worship, here a programme dedicated to major battles from the History of France was chosen, echoing the Great War so uppermost in people's minds. Henri Pinta proposed to treat each window in the same manner: a notable figure (a king, queen etc.) is depicted full-length and is associated with a battle scene illustrating his or her glory in the lower register of the window. The poses of these figures are rather academic (head on, the head occasionally turned). The artist devoted particular attention to the representation of the costumes and attributes that were intended to clearly identify

each figure. The faces are executed in grisaille, producing an effect akin to a portrait. The relatively extensive colour palette incorporates bright shades (red, green, blue etc.). This initial programme was modified, however, when the Imperial War Graves Commission\* decided to donate some stained glass windows in recognition of the assistance provided by France in creating the British cemeteries, Six windows were substituted by stained glass windows made in 1929 by the English artist Henry Payne, who maintained a certain consistency with Henri Pinta's original programme by proposing windows showing standing figures. Henry Payne's style, however, appears more detailed and realistic, in the treatment of the faces in particular.

# The stained glass windows



Lower register of the Fighting France stained glass window (i).



British stained glass window depicting Joan of Arc (g).



British stained glass window depicting angels flying over a cemetery (o).

# The stained glass windows of the nave

The nave has seven windows (three to the north and four to the south). Six of them feature illustrious sovereigns, namely (in chronological order): Saint Clotilde (s), Charles Martel (r), Godfrey of Bouillon (q), Charlemagne (b), Philip II (c) and Saint Louis (d). The seventh window (a), located over the tribune, is treated individually. This has a stained glass design showing the coat of arms of the three towns under the bishopric of Arras: Arras, Boulognesur-Mer and Saint-Omer.

# The stained glass windows of the transept

The transept is lit by ten windows: six on the gable walls and four on the side walls. The two stained glass windows on

the east side walls complete the cycle of notable figures, featuring Saint Joan of Arc (**p**) and Saint Genevieve (**e**), the patron saint of Paris. In counterpoint to these, on the west side walls, two stained glass windows evoke the Great War through allegory: «Fighting France» (i) in a scene in which soldiers in horizon blue uniform are charging forward under the Tricolour flag, and « Triumphant France » (I) with soldiers marching along the Champs Elysées in Paris, headed by figures that are recognisable as Generals Foch and Joffre. Initially, the cycle dedicated to the Great War was intended to be bigger (to include allegorical figures of Suffering and Grateful France, an evocation of the battlefields, regiments etc.) but it was curtailed to

make way for the stained glass windows gifted by the British, which decorate the 6 windows on the transept gables. On the north side, the central stained glass window depicts Saint George (n), the patron saint of England, whilst on either side allegorical figures look over the graves of soldiers (m, o). On the south side, Saint Joan of Arc (g), who is thus depicted twice in the chapel, is flanked by allegories of Remembrance and of Glory (f, h). The artist Henry Payne, who created these six stained glass windows, incorporated the various coats of arms of royalty and of the British colonies of the time (Canada, New Zealand etc.) in tribute to the soldiers who travelled from across the British

Empire to fight in France.



South choir stained glass window depicting Saint Barbara (j).



Lower register of the Saint Barbara stained glass window depicting a family of miners (j).



Lower register of the Our Lady of Peace stained glass window depicting a toiling farmer (k).

# The stained glass windows of the choir

The two stained glass windows of the choir are part of the programme devised by Lorin and Pinta and were originally intended to evoke the figure of Our Lady of Loreto, as a reference to the ancient chapel and the pilgrimage to Ablain-Saint-Nazaire that developed. In the end, this project never came to fruition, being replaced by figures of another two saints. Gifted by the wife of Ernest Cuvelette, Managing Director of the Société des Mines de Lens and prime mover behind the reconstitution of the mining infrastructures of Lens after the First World War, the window on the south side is dedicated to Saint Barbara, the patron saint of miners (i). In the lower section there is a scene depicting a mining family in front of a

metal double headframe whose silhouette is reminiscent of pit number 15 of the Société des Mines de Lens in Loos-en-Gohelle. With its distinctive shape, this headframe was nicknamed « Tower Bridge » by the British who were fighting in this sector in 1915. Opposite, on the north side, Our Lady of Peace (k) is depicted with a scene showing a farmer toiling in his field. These two windows illustrate the mining and farming traditions of the regions.

Henri Pinta (1856-1944) was a French painter who specialised in religious subjects. Awarded the Grand Prix de Rome in 1884, he collaborated in particular with Charles Champigneulle who came from a famous family of master glassmakers in Eastern France. Together they designed the stained glass windows for the church of Saint-Vaast in Béthune and the stained glass windows and mosaics for the Basilica of Sacré-Cœur in Marseille.

Charles Lorin (1874-1940) came from a renowned family of master glassmakers, established in Chartres since 1863. His father Nicolas Lorin (1815-1882) founded the workshop and it was later taken over by his son François (1900-1972). The workshop is in operation to this day. In the course of his career, Charles Lorin was commissioned by the Ministry of Fine Art to restore the stained glass windows of a large number of historic monuments.

Henry Payne (1868-1940) was a British glass artist, watercolourist and fresco painter who was close to the Arts and Crafts movement\*.



The high altar 1

The Black Madonna is flanked by a mosaic frieze by Jean Gaudin. On the metal sections, the Polish eagle and the French cockerel 6.

The furniture consists of a high altar\* and two ambons\* in the choir, two side altars\* and two confessionals in the arms of the transept and two stoups at the entrance to the chapel. As for the mosaics, most of the furniture elements were designed by Louis-Marie Cordonnier. For their manufacture, he worked with the Buisine cabinetmaking workshops and with the sculptor Adolphe Masselot, both established in Lille. The Lavoux\* limestone used for the high altar co-exists alongside cement, a cheaper material, which was used for the confessionals, for example. The high altar is without question the finest furniture piece **1**: behind a relatively simple altar table a wide rectangular altarpiece is set, decorated with two

censer-bearing angels sculpted in bas-relief. Above the tabernacle, a crucifix supported by narrow colonettes dominates the group. Elegant and simple, this high altar is clearly influenced by Art Deco: geometric and stylised forms, virtually flat relief work, mosaic frieze around the tabernacle adding a subtle touch of colour. The ambons\* 2 are executed in the same. vein. This note of modernity was clearly an afterthought, as Cordonnier's archives show a plan for a high altar in a style similar to that of the side altars 3 which are more Romanesque in inspiration. Less elaborate than the main altar, they have bas-relief decorations composed solely of foliage and vegetal motifs. Decorated with stylised vegetal and geometric motifs,

the confessionals are of similar workmanship to the rest of the furniture.

# The triptych of Our Lady of Czestochowa 9

Placed in the chapel in 1935, this icon of the Black Madonna, a copy of that at the monastery of Jasna-Góra in Cz stochowa, reveals the importance of the Polish community which developed in the region as the result of the coal extraction operations here.

# The Christ of Carency 6

Partially mutilated, this Christ on the cross, retained as a relic after the War, came from the former Calvary of Carency. The cross itself is outside, on the south wall of the chapel.

### The Buisine workshops

Passed down from father to son, the cabinetmaking and wood sculpture workshop owned by the Buisine family executed many furniture orders for churches in metropolitan Lille during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Charles Buisine-Rigot (1820-1893) was largely responsible for developing the business; he collaborated in particular with the Lille architect Charles Leroy and carried out work abroad. It was his son, Édouard Buisine (1856-1953), who worked on the Notre-Dame-de-Lorette project.

# Adolphe Masselot (1877-1959)

studied at the School of Fine Arts in Lille and then the School of Fine Arts in Paris. Mobilised and taken prisoner in 1914-1918, upon his return he collaborated with Maurice Ringot and made a number of memorials to the dead, including the French Ossuary at Mont Kemmel (Belgium). He was also very active in religious art and worked with Louis-Marie Cordonnier on many occasions.





Drawing of the original statue lost during the bombardments.



Portrait of Bishop Julien.

The tomb of Bishop Julien 0.

The statuary consists of two main elements placed in the apsidioles of the transept: the statue of Our Ladv of Loreto on the north side and the tomb of Bishop Julien on the south side. The statue of Our Lady of Loreto replaces the statue lost during the bombardment of the original chapel. Honoured during pilgrimages, this statue adopts traditional iconography: a Virgin and Child seated on a house borne by two angels. The group stands on a solid base and is protected by a stone canopy, its vaulted ceiling covered by mosaics. Sculpted by Adolphe Masselot, the style of this group is touched by modernism, similar to that of the high altar.

The tomb of

# Bishop Julien ®

The prime promoter of the initiative to erect a monument on the hill of Lorette, Bishop Julien is buried in the chapel, as was his wish. Located in the south transept, his tomb is the work of Félix Alexandre Desruelles. The bishop is depicted in a standing position and in ceremonial dress, his hands clasped in front of him, holding a fold of his cloak. He is standing at the grave of a poilu (or foot soldier), represented by a cross emerging from the earth surrounded by helmets and flowers. After studying at the Ecclesiastical Institute of Yvetot, Eugène-Louis-Ernest Julien (1856-1930) was ordained to the priesthood in Rouen in 1881 and was

appointed priest of the parish of Notre-Dame in Le Havre. Appointed Bishop of Arras in 1917, he dedicated himself to caring for displaced populations and soldiers during and after the War. Very involved in rebuilding the devastated churches of Artois, he became known as the « bishop of the reconstruction ».

### Félix Alexandre Desruelles (1865-1943)

was a French sculptor and a native of Valenciennes. Awarded the Second Prix de Rome in 1891, he was a member of the Institute and the Academy of Fine Arts. He executed a number of sculptures for memorials to the dead, in particular that in Arras in 1930 and the Monument aux Fusillés (monument to the executed) in Lille. He is the author of one of the gilded bronze statues gracing the esplanade of the Trocadéro in Paris: « Les Fruits » ("The Fruits") made in 1937.





Plaque to the memory of Louis Mercier (1856-1927), Director of the Compagnie des Mines de Béthune (9).

DE L'ASSOCIATION DU MONUMENT DE NOTRE DAME DE LORETTE

REQUIESCAT IN PACE



he commemorative plagues.



Plaque dedicated to François Faber, racing cyclist 0.



Portrait of Louise de Bettignies 10.

# The commemorative plaques

Even before the decorations were installed, the lower sections of the chapel walls were gradually covered by a multitude of engraved plaques. Individual plaques were created at the request of families in memory of fallen soldiers while group plaques paid tribute to entire regiments, all having seen action at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette or in its vicinity. Some plaques are dedicated to prominent figures such as those of Louis Mercier 9, the first Treasurer of the Association du Monument de Lorette and also Director of the Compagnie des Mines de Béthune, and François Faber, the famous racing cyclist.

# François Faber (1887-1915) •

Of Luxembourg nationality, François Faber won many titles during his career, in particular winning the Tour de France in 1909. He enlisted as a volunteer with the Foreign Legion at the start of the War and died in May 1915 during the French offensive launched against the sectors of Lorette and Vimy. As his remains could not be found, he was officially declared dead on 25 February 1921. Every year since 1918, the Grand Prix François-Faber has been organised in Luxembourg in his memory.

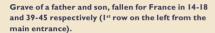
# Louise de Bettignies (1880-1918) •

On the strength of her mastery of languages (English, German and Italian), gained in the course of her studies and travels abroad as a tutor. Louise de Bettignies was recruited as a secret agent by the British Army in 1914. She went under the pseudonym of Alice Dubois and organised an extensive network with links to the Belgian and Dutch networks. Arrested by the Germans in October 1915 and condemned to death in 1916, her sentence was commuted to forced labour for life. She died in captivity in Cologne on 27 September 1918. Her body was repatriated and buried in her home town of Saint-Amand-les-Eaux in 1920. In 1994, the wooden cross from her grave in Germany was symbolically placed in the chapel by her family.

# What were the origins of those men who fell at Lorette?

The soldiers who fought on the hill of Lorette were not exclusively from the Nord or Pas-de-Calais regions of France. The 10th French Army, moved to the Artois front in 1914 and 1915, was primarily made up of the 21st Army Corps\* (43th, 45th and 13th infantry divisions) and the 33rd Army Corps specially created on September 1914 in Arras (70th, 77th and 55th infantry divisions). Commanded by General Maistre, the majority of the men of the 21st Army Corps came from the Vosges, Haute-Marne and Haute-Saône areas. The men of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, commanded by General Pétain, also came from Eastern France but also from the Alps (77th division, known as the Barbot Division) and from Paris and the Paris region. Other division were sent up as reinforcement throughout the conflict, among then the Moroccan Division, formed by numerous Legionnaires of various nationalities and combatants from North Africa.





Monument dedicated to General Maistre located in the immediate vicinity of the necropolis.



Monument to the glory of the Barbot Division, which stands on the RD 937 in Souchez.

### Among the graves...

Some graves in the necropolis are quite distinctive, such as the graves containing the remains of two or three soldiers. identified or otherwise and forever united in death. There are also graves in which a father and son are buried together, the first having died in 1914-1918 and the second in 1939-1945. There are six such examples in the cemetery. Soldiers of non-French nationalities are also buried in the necropolis: 64 Russians, one Belgian and one Romanian.

# General Barbot

Ernest Barbot (1855-1915) was a key figure in the action in Artois. Entering the French Military Academy at the age of 20, he made a career in the army and achieved the rank of Colonel in 1912. Appointed Brigadier

General on 8 September 1914, he arrived in Artois at the head of the 77<sup>th</sup> Alpine Division. General Barbot is best known as the ardent defender of the town of Arras in October 1914, and later of Souchez during the Second Battle of Arras in May 1915. Fatally wounded on 10 May 1915 in the Cabaret Rouge sector, he lies alongside his brothersin-arms in Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. His grave is located at the start of the first row on the left from the main entrance. In addition to this grave, in 1937 a commemorative monument was erected in Souchez in honour of the « Barbot Division ».

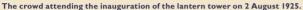
# The monument to General Maistre

Paul Maistre (1858-1922) is also an iconic figure of the battles waged at Lorette. His career followed a similar path to that of General Barbot, Promoted to the rank of Divisional General in September 1914, he took over command of the 21st Army Corps which was positioned on the front line to retake the hill of Lorette during the terrible confrontations of May 1915. Maistre's role during the War and his involvement in the Notre-Dame-de-Lorette project explains the presence of a monument in his honour. Initially erected inside the necropolis, this monument was later relocated to the approximate site of the General's command post. Made in 1925, this sculpted group is the work of Maximilien Blondat.

# Maximilien Blondat (1872-1925)

was a sculptor whose work is characteristic of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements. After studying at the Germain-Pilon School of Art, in 1892 he entered the School of Fine Arts in Paris. He was a founder member of the French Society of Decorative Arts, Without question, his best known accomplishment is the « Youth » fountain, a work in bronze depicting three children looking at three frogs, reproduced in numerous towns in France and beyond (including Dijon, Fontainebleau, Düsseldorf, Buenos Aires and Denver).







Programme for a pilgrimage offered by the Aire-sur-La-Lys veterans' association.



Medal commemorating the battles of Lorette 1914-1915.

Even before the end of the War, the hill of Notre-Damede-Lorette was visited by a variety of delegations, offering the French Army the opportunity to show the theatre of battle in May 1915: among them a Swedish mission in November 1915, a Japanese military delegation in December 1915 and a delegation from the municipality of Marseille in 1918. In addition to the «first stone» ceremony, the project was also punctuated by numerous public events such as religious ceremonies - the annual pilgrimages resumed in 1919 - and official visits including that of King George V in 1922. These events all constituted an opportunity to repeat

appeals for donations

towards the construction of the buildings.

The official inauguration of the site, and particularly that of the lantern tower, took place on 2 August 1925 in the presence of French Prime Minister Paul Painlevé, sent by President Gaston Doumergue. Attended by almost 100,000 people, this constituted a momentous commemorative event. The blessing of the chapel took place on 29 May 1927 and it was consecrated on 5 September 1937.

### Remembrance tourism

In addition to the families who came in their thousands from across France to mourn at the graves of their loved ones, many interested visitors flocked to the former battlefields and devastated

regions, including Artois and the necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. Pilgrimages and trails were specially organised, with «remembrance guides» and other itineraries. In 1923, a drivable side road was constructed from the Arras-Béthune road in Souchez in order to render the necropolis more accessible. Before this, the only passable road had been the steep Route de la Blanche Voie from Ablain-Saint-Nazaire. The Association du Monument de Lorette itself acquired two minibuses and in 1929 constructed the visitor shelter which is still in use today. Hawkers and itinerant traders also flocked to the edge of the site. In response to these effects, deemed undesirable.

the government took the decision to list the site as a Historic Monument in 1929.



Burial ceremony for the Unknown Soldier of the battles in North Africa, held on 16 October 1977 in the presence of the President of France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

A ceremony of the Garde d'Honneur de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

# The commemoration of other conflicts

On 16 July 1950, an unknown soldier of the Second World War was buried in the lantern tower alongside his brothers of 1914-1918, in the present of Guy Mollet, Henceforth, the site of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette became a place of remembrance beyond that of World War One. In 1955 an urn containing the ashes of deportees who perished in the concentration camps was placed in the ossuary. Later, first on 16 October 1977 and then on 8 June 1980, in the presence of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, two unknown soldiers were buried here, one in homage to those lost in North Africa between 1952 and 1962 and the other in homage to soldiers who had fallen in Indochina between 1945 and 1954.

Every year, commemorative ceremonies are organised at the site, in order to perpetuate the memory of these conflicts and the sacrifice of all soldiers who have fallen for France.

# The Guard of Honour at Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

Following the inauguration of the lantern tower in 1925, volunteers decided to organise themselves in order to assist the public and to manage the flows of visitors. They took the name « Fidèles Servants de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette » (Faithful servants of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette). Later, an official association was formed in 1927 under the title « Garde d'Honneur de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette » (Guard of honour of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette). It was separate from the Association du Monument de Lorette, but was nevertheless largely made up of the same people. This association set itself the task of preserving the memory of the dead and of welcoming

visitors. In 1927 it had just over 200 members, numerous veterans among them. As the years have passed, new volunteers of all ages have swelled the association's ranks and today it numbers over 4,000 members. Divided into 22 groups, each attached to a municipality of the Pas-de-Calais close to the necropolis, the Guards of Honour work in a shift pattern to ensure a daily presence on the site from the 1 March to 30 November, and to help with the organisation of ceremonies (the eve of Remembrance Day on 10 November etc.). The Garde d'Honneur de Notre-Dame-de-Lorette was recognised as an association of public utility by the Decree of 6 November 1963.



The Ring of Remembrance viewed from the lantern tower of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette.

The Ring of Remembrance and the panoramic view towards the plain of Lens and Vimy Ridge

# The sector incorporating the hills of Artois is characterised by a large concentration of remembrance sites connected with the First World War. On the occasion of the centenary of the conflict - with the support of the State/Ministry of Defence, the Pas-de-Calais County Council and the Nord County Council - the Regional Council of Nord-Pas-de-Calais and the Conurbation Committee of Lens-Liévin committed themselves to developing two major projects to honour the sacrifice of thousands of men and to contribute to the work of remembrance for future generations: the Ring of Remembrance

at Ablain-Saint-Nazaire and Lens'14-18 – Centre for the History of War and Peace in Souchez.

# An international memorial

The Nord-Pas-de-Calais Regional Council determined to construct a monument of international scope, which aims to go beyond national remembrance of the tragedy. Erected symbolically opposite the Necropolis of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette and inaugurated on 11 November 2014 in the presence of the President of France, this memorial bears the names of 580,000 soldiers from across the world who fell on the soil of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais during the conflict. Presented in alphabetical order irrespective of nationality,

together these names underscore the notions of peace, fraternity and freedom between peoples. This unique project necessitated the enormous task of collecting the names of soldiers killed in the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions between 1914 and 1918, a task carried out in partnership, in particular, with the DMPA (Directorate of Remembrance. Heritage and Archives), the Ministry of Defence for French soldiers, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)\* for the British troops and the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK)\* for the German servicemen.

### A monumental work

The architect Philippe Prost. winner of the competition launched by the Regional Council, drew inspiration from the symbolic shape of the ring to express the overall concept of the architectural project. Made up of 125 wedgeshaped UHPC concrete\* blocks, in a dark colour to contrast with the golden light of the 500 stainless steel plaques inscribed with the soldiers' names. this monumental work is at the confluence of technical innovation and aesthetic endeavour.



The engraved plagues on the Ring of Remembrance.

Identity tag of Léon Senet (back), found during the work undertaken for the memorial.

The architect explains his approach in these terms: « we chose the figure of a ring, thinking of the circle formed by people holding hands. The ring is synonymous with unity and eternity. Unity, because the names form a sort of human chain, and eternity because the letters are joined without an end, in alphabetical order without any distinction of nationality, rank or religion. (...) Anchored in the ground across two-thirds of its perimeter, the ring then detaches where the downward slope of the land increases. Its cantilevered ring is there to remind us that peace always remains fragile. »

# Philippe Prost

Born in 1959, Philip Prost is an architect and urban designer. He founded his firm of architects in 1993 in Paris. Also a researcher, he specialises in particular in military architecture and the citadels of Vauban. In 2004 he received an honourable mention in the Equerre d'Argent architecture award for the construction of a housing development in the 20th Arrondissement of Paris.

Other talents were enrolled for the realisation of this complex project. The typographer Pierre di Sciullo created a new typeface, called « Lorette », in order to facilitate the reading of this multitude of names originating from a variety of alphabets (Anglo-Saxon, African, Indian etc.). The conceptual artist Yann Toma designed the illumination for the monument, « La Grande Veilleuse » (The Great Wake Light). This work is presented as an illuminated partition, whose aim is to encourage the public to remember the young lives cut short and to reflect on violence and the notion of peace in our time.

# The discovery of soldiers' remains...

On the occasion of the construction of the memorial. the bodies of several soldiers who perished during the battles of 1915 were uncovered by the Archaeological Service of the Town of Arras. It was possible to identify two French soldiers from their identity tags: Léon Senet, a native of Tours (37), a sergeant of the 282<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment who died on 23 May 1915, and Pierre Sorhaïts, originally from the Landes (40), a soldier of the 174th Infantry Regiment who died on 21 May 1915. A plaque installed below the Ring of Remembrance marks the spot where the two bodies were discovered.



Lens'14-18 – Centre for the History of War and Peace in Souchez, seen from the entrance and from the esplanade (computer-generated images).

View of the interior.

# Lens'14-18 – Centre for the History of War and Peace in Souchez

Built at the foot of the hill of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette at the initiative of the Lens-Liévin Conurbation Committee, the aim of this centre is to present the conduct of the Great War in French Flanders and Artois. This makes it a real key to understanding the First World War sites in Nord-Pas-de-Calais. The architectural design was entrusted to the architect and scenographer Pierre-Louis Faloci, who was chosen following a European competition. Comprising a number of rectangular shapes in grey concrete, the building blends harmoniously into its surroundings and the lie of the terrain. The architect has worked

in the subtle and measured presence of glass, thereby creating a play of contrast between dark and light, both outside and inside. The rural setting devised by the architect, structured by clipped evergreen hedges, is an invitation to reflection and contemplation. Inside, the museography is structured into seven distinct themes, each retracing different stages of the War in the region: mobile warfare, the systems of trenches, the deadly and inconclusive offensives, the occupation of the Nord region, the offensives of 1918, death on the front and the « Hell of the Nord », the ruins and the Reconstruction. The historical content is the fruit of the work of historian Yves Le Maner who gathered together a team of French, Belgian, British

and German specialists. A contemporary scenography and museographic techniques underpin the visit pathway, illustrated by a wealth of photographs and archive films. Designed to resonate with the international memorial of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, this centre also includes a memorial space where the files of the 580,000 soldiers whose names are engraved on the Ring of Remembrance can be consulted.

102 rue Pasteur, Souchez Longitude: 2.74215 – Latitude: 50.40126

### Pierre-Louis Faloci

Born in Nice in 1949, Pierre Louis Faloci lives and works in Paris. His professional practice and training have a single focus: to consider architecture and the landscape as an inseparable whole. He has designed a number of housing projects (Mont Beuvray 1995-2011) and has worked on several projects of a cultural or museographic nature (Musée Rodin in 2007, the landscape development of the surroundings of the Struthof concentration camp and the construction of the European Centre for Deported Resistance Members in 2008. the Halle aux Sucres reference centre for urban sustainability in Dunkirk in 2014).





The Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez.

The German War Cemetery at Maison Blanche, Neuville-Saint-Vaast.

### Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery in Souchez

The Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery is one of largest Commonwealth cemeteries in the region. Created by the British in 1916, it owes his name to the presence of a café called « Le Cabaret Rouge » which stood nearby. At the end of the War, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission makes of Souchez a combined necropolis, containing 7 665 war dead soldiers from battlefields across the Nord and Pas-de-Calais regions. Among them, a lot of Canadian soldiers fought on the Vimy Ridge during the Battle of Arras on april 1917. It was from this cemetery that the body of the « unknown Canadian soldier » was exhumed

on May 2000, which now rests symbolicaly in front of the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa. This cemetery possesses the main characteristics of the military necropolises created by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission: the presence of a low wall around the cemetery and an architectural structure at the entrance, the cross of sacrifice and the stone of remembrance bearing the inscription « Their names will live for evermore ».

RD 937 – 62153 Souhcez Longitude: 2.741475 – Latitude: 50.380660

### The White House German necropolis in Neuville-Saint-Vaast

This cemetery was created by the French military authorities between 1919 ans 1923 tu burv German combatants fallen on the Artois front. It is the biggest German First World War cemetery on French soil. It was renovated between 1975 and 1983 by the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge. 44 833 soldiers are buried here. The graves are marked by black crosses, each bearing four names. Unknown soldiers are gathered together in a communal grave. The design of the Germen cemeteries draws on the notion of communion between Man and Nature, inspired by

Germanic mythology. The gravestones fit harmoniously into their surroundings, giving free rein to the spread of vegetation.

RD 937 – 62580 Neuville-Saint-Vaast Longitude: 2.751855 – Latitude: 50.343310



The Canadian National Vimy Memorial on Vimy Ridge.

The Wellington Quarry in Arras.

# The Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada

Overlooking the mining basin, Vimy Ridge was a key German defensive position during the War. It is on this peak that the Canadian government erected a monumental complex to the memory of its 66,000 soldiers lost in action during the First World War. The work of Walter Seymour Allward, this memorial commemorates in particular the battle of 9 April 1917 during which the Canadians recapture the ridge. Inaugurated in 1936, it became a symbol of the birth of the nation, so indelibly was this victory imprinted on the history of Canada.

Close to the monument, trenches from the one-time battlefield have been preserved and are open to the public, as are some of the tunnels used during the battle. An interpretation centre provides essential keys to an understanding of Canadian involvement in the conflict.

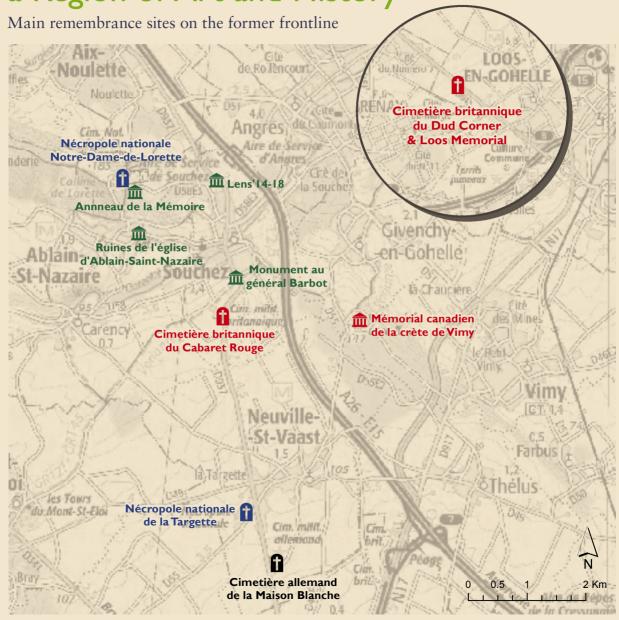
RD 55 - 62580 Vimy Longitude: 2.772847 -Latitude: 50.379060

# The Wellington Quarry in Arras

In November 1916, the British decided to use the chalk extraction quarries beneath the town to create a real network of underground barracks. capable of accommodating up to 24,000 troops. A strategic location as well as a living space, and named Wellington by the New Zealand sappers, the quarry preserves the memory of thousands of soldiers quartered underground just a few metres from the front, before launching themselves onto the field of battle on 9 April 1917.

An audio-guided visit accompanied by a guide-interpreter offers visitors the opportunity to discover the site which is located 20 metres below ground level.

Rue Arthur Delétoille – 62000 Arras Longitude: 2.782433 – Latitude: 50.280695 The Lens-Liévin Pays d'Art et d'Histoire, a Region of Art and History



# Glossary

Altar: a table located within the church and used to celebrate Mass and the Eucharist.

Ambon: a tribune, often in the form of a pulpit, placed at the entrance to the choir in a church, where the priest stands to read the holy scriptures.

Apse: a protruding area, generally located at the eastern end of a church, in the axial termination of the choir. The apse may be semicircular or polygonal.

**Apsidiole:** an apse of more modest size, generally containing a secondary altar.

Arched: term describing an arch or vaulted ceiling curved in a perfect semi-circle.

Army Corps: a military unit. A French Army Corps comprised two infantry divisions, one artillery regiment, one cavalry regiment, two reserve infantry regiments and auxiliary units (stretcher bearers, supply corps etc.), totalling approximately 40,000 men.

Arts and Crafts: a reforming artistic movement which emerged in England in the late nineteenth century, promoting a return to the values of traditional known-how and craftsmanship, in response to developing industrialisation.

Campo-santo: a kind of cloister made up of covered galleries.

Dentil: square-section ornamental motif (tooth) used in friezes, generally underneath a cornice.

Gemel window: an opening divided into two equal sections, generally by means of a colonnette.

High altar: main altar located in the choir of a church, as opposed to altars of lesser importance known as secondary altars.

Imperial War Graves
Commission, later the
Commonwealth War Graves
Commission (CWGC): an
independent organisation
founded in 1917, tasked
with the creation and
then the maintenance of
Commonwealth cemeteries
during the First and Second
World Wars.

Lavoux stone: limestone from the quarries in the French town of Lavoux, in the department of La Vienne (86), prized in particular for its fine grain.

Mandorla: almond shape (mandorla in Italian) within which a figure is depicted (e.g. Christ or the Virgin).

### Romano-Byzantine:

architectural style which developed in the late nineteenth century and the twentieth century, borrowing from both Romanesque and Byzantine art.

Spendrel: a joinery or masonry structure inserted at the intersection of two wall sections.

**Tessera:** a small ceramic fragment used to compose mosaic patterns.

**Tympanium:** a space located above an opening, between the lintel and the arch.

Ultra High Performance
Fibre Reinforced Concrete
(UHPFRC): concrete with
exceptional properties of
durability and strength. A
favoured material for artistic
structures, monumental towers
etc.

### Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge (VDK):

The service for the maintenance of German war graves, an association founded in 1919 in order to create and maintain German war graves, first from the First World War and later the Second World War.

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# **Cover photographs:**

**Front cover:** general view of the necropolis and the Ring of Remembrance

**Back cover, top:** mosaics on the dome of the chapel

**Bottom:** Lens'14-18 – Centre for the History of War and Peace in Souchez

### **Graphic design:**

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Schematic plan of the chapel

# Choir Transept Nave

# Stained glasses

### (in blue the British ones)

- **a** Coat of arms of Arras, Boulognesur-Mer and Saint-Omer
- **b** Charlemagne and the baptism of the Khan Toudoun in 796
- **c** Philip II and the Battle of Bouvines in 1214
- **d** Saint Louis and the Battle of Taillebourg in 1242
- **e** Saint Genevieve, patron saint of Paris
- **f, g , h** Saint Joan of Arc and the allegories of Remembrance and Glory
- i Fighting France
- i Saint Barbara
- k Our Lady of Peace
- I Triumphant France
- **m, n, o** Saint George, patron saint of England, and angels flying over the graves of soldiers
- **p** Saint Joan of Arc and the victory at Orléans
- **q** Godfrey of Bouillon and Peter the Hermit preaching the crusade
- r Charles Martel and the Battle of Poitiers in 732
- **s** Saint Clotilde, Queen of the Franks, and the Battle of Tolbiac in 496 (or 506)

# Furniture, statuary and commemorative plaques

- 1 High altar
- 2 Ambons
- 3 Side altars
- Confessionals
   Triptych of Our Lady of Czestochowa
- 6 Christ of Carency
- Tomb of Bishop Julien
- Statue of Our Lady of Loreto
- Plaque dedicated to Louis Mercier Director of the Compagnie des mines de Béthune
- Plaque dedicated to François Faber
- 1 Cross of Louise de Bettignies

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The "Villes et Pays d'art et d'histoire" (Cities and countries of art and history) form a national network that is used to share the most innovative lessonns learnt.

The nearby towns of Boulogne-sur-Mer, Cambrai, Lille and Roubaix benefit from the "Villes d'art et d'histoire" (town of art and history) certification; Saint-Omer benefits from the "Pays d'art et d'histoire" certification.





For more information on the local heritage and the activities of the "Pays d'art et d'histoire":

Communauté d'Agglomération de Lens-Liévin 21 rue Marcel Sembat BP 65 62 302 LENS Cedex 03 21 67 13 54

paysdartetdhistoire@agglo-lenslievin.fr

French National Necropolis and International Memorial of Notre-Dame-de-Lorette: RD 58 E3 – 62153 Ablain-Saint-Nazaire

Latitude: 50.399648

# For more information on remembrance tourism:

Office de Tourisme et du Patrimoine de Lens-Liévin 58 rue de la gare 62300 LENS 03 21 67 66 66 info@tourisme-lenslievin.fr www.tourisme-lenslievin.fr

Chemins de Mémoire 14-18 (Remembrance Trails 14-18) Nord-Pas-de-Calais: www.cheminsdememoirenordpasdecalais.fr www.remembrancetrailsnorthernfrance.com









