

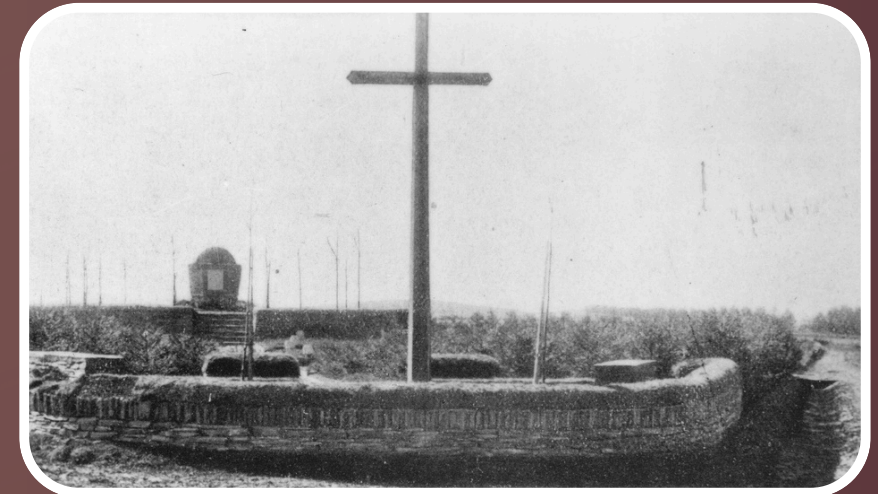
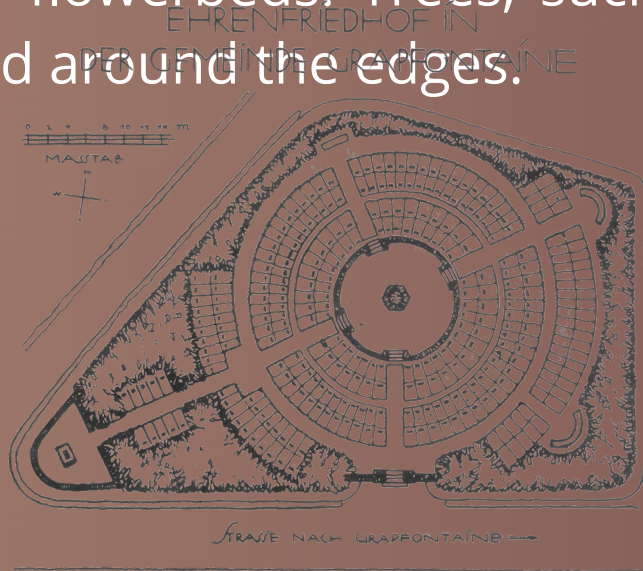
The Haut Chemin Cemetery and its Mausoleum

In the aftermath of the battle of 22 August 1914, the bodies of the combatants killed in action were, for the most part, buried where they had fallen, sometimes in groups and sometimes individually.

The majority of French soldiers were not identified.

In 1916, the Germans photographed all the so-called "primitive" graves, which were included in the "Heldengraber in Sud-Belgien in Wort und Bild" album.

The German Civil Administration of Luxembourg planned to re-inter the bodies in military cemeteries. These cemeteries (ten in what is now the municipality of Neufchâteau) were created the following year, based on plans by the Rhineland architect Ludwig Paffendorf. These cemeteries often feature a rotunda and circular flowerbeds. Trees, such as birch and lime, were planted inside the cemeteries with spruce trees planted around the edges.



Following a proposal from the German Civil Administration at a meeting held on 13th February 1916, the Grapfontaine town council decided to create three cemeteries, including the one at Haut Chemin, and to keep the small fir wood situated on the other side of the road from Montplainchamps to Nolinfaing. This twenty-acre plot of communal land became the site for around 300 graves of German and French soldiers. Eugène Goffinet, a public works contractor in Neufchâteau, was awarded the contract for the cemetery works on 27 June 1917.

From 1919 onwards, the French were keen to identify as many graves as possible, as bereaved families visited the cemetery to pay their respects. Around 1920, the press office of the Belgian Ministry of Railways published a map of French military cemeteries located in southern Luxembourg. This map made it possible for the families to repatriate their deceased to France at the expense of the French State. German families had already been able to do this during the war. Given the success of the initiative, the remaining bodies were grouped together, leading to the disappearance of many small cemeteries in 1923. It was at this time that the Haut Chemin cemetery was closed.

The only remaining cemetery is the one in Malome, which was extended to include 378 German and 289 French graves.

A new cross was erected at the eastern end of the cemetery in the 1990s. The first restoration work was carried out in 2004 by the Compagnons Bâisseurs and Entreprise de Formation par le Travail (a scheme that provides training opportunities through employment).

In 2023, following the clearance of the site, the municipality of Neufchâteau decided to launch an initiative called "Reviving the Franco-German Mausoleum". The Mausoleum was in a poor state of repair. The 11 lime trees, probably the original ones, were healthy but their roots were causing damage particularly to the low walls and staircases. These walls were rebuilt using the traditional drystone wall technique. Eco-friendly landscaping completed the renovation.

