

*Notre Dame
de Lorette*
1914-1918



National Cemetery Military of Notre Dame de Lorette

The hill of Notre Dame de Lorette which rises to 165 metres (500 feet) above sea-level is situated in Artois. It's close to the road which runs from Arras to Béthune.

In the 18th century, Florent GUILBERT, born in a neighbouring parish (Ablain Saint Nazaire) went on a pilgrimage to the Italian sanctuary in Lorette, and came back cured. He then had an oratory erected in 1727. It was destroyed in 1794, rebuild in 1815 then altered from 1870 to 1880. The oratory became a small church which stood until 1915. A stele now marks its place. The first World War made our hill sadly fanions.

The Battle of Lorette lasted 12 months from October 1914 to October 1915 and claimed numerous victims. 100.000 people were killed and as many were wounded on both sides.

A national cemetery was erected on about 30.000 of land where there are now more than 20.000 individual tombs. There are 8 ossuaries (the main one being at the bottom of the Lantern Tower) where the bones of 22.970 unknown soldiers have been gathered. A section of the cemetery has been kept for the moslem soldiers.

In the center of the cemetery, the monument is made of two parts :

- The Lantern Tower : the first stone was erected by maréchal Petain on the 19th of June 1921 and the inaugural ceremony took place on the 2nd of August 1925. It's 150 feet high, there are 200 steps. Its foot is a square with sides of 35 feet. At night, its beacon-light revolves five times every minute. Inside, a chapel of rest contains 32 coffins (4 groups of 8 oak - ebony stained - coffins). One of the coffins contains the body of an unknown soldier of the 2nd World War, another the body of a soldier of the North African War and a third one the body of a soldier of Indochine. A reliquary

containing soil and ashes from the concentration camps was brought there on the 25th of April 1955.

- The Chapel : looking both Romanesque and Byzantine with its outside altar, is a sober but impressing building. It's made of a cement framework with a "Givet Stone" facing. It's 46 metres long, 14 metres wide and its transept is 30 metres. Notre Dame de Lorette statue stands on the right of the main altar. The Chapel was blessed on the 26th May 1927 by Monseigneur Julien and consecrated on the 5th september 1937. Whenever possible, the chaplain celebrates mass at eleven o'clock every Sunday from May to the 11th November.

The aim of the so-called "Association of Notre Dame de Lorette Monument" founded in 1920, is to make the national cemetery more attractive and to help retain the memory of the dead of all wars. There are about 2.800 members either founder members, associated members or Honour Guards. The Honour Guards want to retrain the memory of those who died for France. They represent the families of the dead buried in the national cemetery.

Every day, from Palm Sunday of Remembrance Day, several of its members mount guard by turns at the ossuary. Each Sunday during that period, in the centre of the cemetery, the "Souvenir Flame" is rekindled at 11.45 by the leader of the guards on duty that day. War veterans or patriotic associations often attend the ceremony.

If you want further information contact :

SECRETARIAT DE L'ASSOCIATION
DU MONUMENT DE NOTRE DAME DE LORETTE
62153 ABLAIN SAINT NAZAIRE

Les Combattants d'Artois

Le peuple des Ossuaires

