



American Battle Monuments Commission – World War One Sites

Routes of Interest - Somme American Cemetery, Hindenburg Line and Saint-Quentin Canal

Historical Note: The Somme American Cemetery rests in an important battlefield, where American Divisions attacked and pierced the Hindenburg Line. They were the new American 27th “N.Y.” and 30th “Old Hickory” Infantry Divisions of II Corps, with 217 veteran Australian advisers. They were reinforced by British Artillery, and British and American tanks. Here broad fields are dominated by easily fortified towns and farms on high ground. The local underground canal strengthened defenses, but it meant that here tanks would not have to cross a water obstacle.

1. Leaving the Cemetery the town to the east is Bony.
 - Bony was where the third layer of the Hindenburg Line defenses ran north and south. Lanes of barbed wire and firing trenches lay between the town and the site of the cemetery.
2. From the exit of the Somme American Cemetery turn right on D57.
 - The bend in the road in the fields was where the middle belt of the Hindenburg defenses ran from the woods to the right zigzagging to the ridge on your left. There was a fortified farm here, Quennemont Farm. It changed hands between the American 27th Division and German forces multiple times.
3. Pass under the highway.
4. Turn left at the intersection on D332.
5. Go straight at the crossroad.
6. Drive over the highway.
 - Just past the Farm ahead is where the American 30th Division began their five day advance in September 1918 through the Hindenburg line defenses. On a two mile front starting several hundred yards north of here, down to the British 46th Division to the south.
7. Proceeded on the D331
 - The first day the advance was less than 500 yards into the Hindenburg outpost line.
 - The depth of the main German defense line, three fortified trenches and seven belts of barbed wire, lay north and south where the D331 is sunken, climbing the hill to the village strongpoint of Bellicourt. The Bellicourt British Cemetery is at the ahead on the left.
8. At the intersection in Bellicourt turn right toward Saint- Quentin on D1044.
9. Go South from Bellicourt and take the first right hand exit toward Hameau de Riqueval.
10. Down the road pull into the parking lot on the left.
 - This is the Musée du Touage that commemorates the Saint-Quentin Canal Tunnel that runs beneath Bellicourt for 3 .5 miles. You may visit the Canal towpath and tunnel entrance with its nearby fortifications and several war monuments.
 - A Tennessee State monument to the 30th Division is outside by the canal boat display.
 - The Germans fortified the Tunnel entrances and created shelters, exits, and fighting positions. The Americans with tanks stormed through Bellicourt September 29, after a two day bombardment, behind a barrage with smoke. Tanks could not cross the canal elsewhere.

Mopping up was difficult as many Germans only emerged from deep tunnels after the assault had passed. This was the first breach in the Hindenburg Line.

11. Return to The D1044 and turn south.
12. At the intersection turn left toward Nauroy on D932.
 - This road is roughly the boundary between the American 30th Division to the north, and the British 46th Division.
13. At the next crossroad turn left toward Nauroy.
14. At the traffic Circle take the second right on D93.
 - As you leave town the fields to your right past Nauroy were the limit of advance of the 30th Division on September 29. An astonishing 2 miles through heavy fortifications.
15. At the traffic circle in Bellicourt take the second right.
16. At the intersection turn right toward Cambrai on D1044.
17. Turn into the stone gateway on the left.
 - This is the Bellicourt American Monument, a memorial and tribute to Americans who served with the British Armies in France. At the rear of the monument is a map of local American operation and aides to pick them out in the local terrain.
18. Leaving the monument turn left toward American Cemetery on D1044.
19. Pass the road to Bony on your left.
20. Drive into the twin towns of Le Catelet and Gouy.
 - Keep an eye out on the left, in the woods is a 16th century bastion fort.
 - In 1940 French and German armored units clashed in the main street here.
21. Turn left at the park where the street widens on to the D440.
22. The road curves left at the edge of town.
 - At the church outside of town the road curves right.
The North exit of the Canal tunnel is to your right.
23. Turn hard left toward Bony on D57.
 - The terrain here made it easy for Germans to counter attack the 27th Divisions.
24. At the crossroad in Bony turn right toward Cimetière Américain o D57.
 - Bony was fortified strongpoint with double lines of trenches and wire around it. It sat in the middle of the Hindenburg defenses that ran north and south from here.
 - The town Hall in Bony was donated by Americans.
25. At the Crossroad in Bony go straight toward Memorial Américain on D57.
26. The Cemetery is Ahead on your right.

Note: Though the 30th Division penetrated the Hindenburg Line South of here, the 27th Division had harder going in the fields west of Bony. The road on the East side of the cemetery leads to Guillemont Farm, and north of that is the "The Knoll", both elevated strongpoints. The heights concealed routes for German reinforcements, or later counterattacks to move up. During their initial attack no unit advanced to the north of the 27th Division so they were harassed by German units there who lent their support to Germans in front of Bony. First Lieutenant William Turner was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for leading attacks and attacking enemy strongpoints alone on the Knoll. Sergeants Joseph Adkinson, and Milo Lemert of the 30th Division were awarded the Medal of Honor for singlehandedly attacking enemy machinegun positions near Bellicourt. Lemert was killed in action.