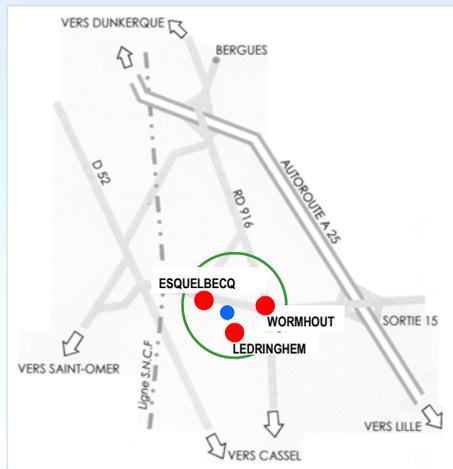


If you wish to know more about the success of the Dynamo Operation thanks to the Allied resistant struggle and in order to realize all the horror of the events of 26, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31<sup>st</sup> May 1940, get the book written by Guy Rommeleare, a local historian, edited in French and in English "The forgotten massacre"

This book is sold at the price of 20 € (to support the association "La Plaine aux Bois" which maintains and valorises the site) at the Tourist Offices of Esquelbecq and Wormhout also at the Supermarket route de Bergues - Wormhout

Guided visit of the site of memory : 2 €



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IPNS

# «La plaine au Bois» Esquelbecq



*Site of memory  
of the second world war  
28 may 1940*



*"Following the steps of our history"*



On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1940, the German troops try to block the access to the town of Wormhout, a strategic route to Dunkirk.

At the end of that facing, a hundred soldiers belonging to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, to the Cheshire Regiment and the Royal Artillery were taken prisoners and kept in a barn situated in a meadow at a place called "La Plaine au Bois" where they were massacred.

This site of memory evokes the massacre of the 80 British soldiers and 1 French



This pollard poplar grew there before May 1940. It was the nearest tree to the barn of the massacre which was destroyed in 1960. In 1972, British veterans who had fought in the neighbouring villages rediscovered the site and fixed crosses there.

The site became a place for pilgrimage and the sacred tree, a privileged witness of the visit of thousands of veterans who came to pay a tribute to the victims.

You are also invited to have a particular look at the 80 copper beeches

that represent the 80 victims and at the 40 oak-trees offered by the veterans of Birmingham.

This barn was a shelter for the cows and there, a hundred prisoners were packed like herrings in a barrel, in the end of the afternoon on 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1940. Twelve S.S soldiers from the Leibstandarte, under command of Wilhelm Mohnke started their horrible duty by throwing 5 grenades in the barn.



A British Captain, Lynn Allen decided then to flee taking with him his neighbour Bert Evans who was injured and whose arm was nearly cut off by a grenade blast. This barn has been rebuilt and inaugurated in 2001 by 2 survivors of that massacre, Alf Tombs and Bert Evans.



In their escape, Lynn Allen and Bert Evans came to this pond and sank into the mud. An S.S soldier arrived, aimed his gun to the British captain and directly killed him by shooting a bullet in his head. Aimed in his turn, Evans got a bullet in his neck and collapsed in the water pretending he was dead. Then Evans crept out of the water and threaded his way to the *Bollengier* farm where he arrived in the evening.

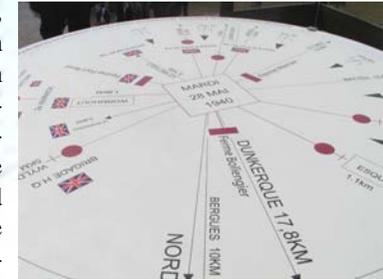


A doctor attended him and his arm was amputated later in a hospital. In 2007, Bert Evans is still alive and returns every year as a pilgrim. The body of Captain Allen has never been found. The cleaning of the pond and the earth extracted from a second and new pond permitted to build the belvedere which thus became his grave.



This viewing platform was inaugurated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2004. From the top of the mound you can see the Flemish plain and the Mount Cassel which was also a strong defence area for the British.

From the top of the mound, five metres high, you can discover an orientation table which shows the positions of the British soldiers and the moving of the Nazis troops. It's situated in the centre of a huge cross formed by two gravelled paths.



You can also discover a monument built in memory of soldiers and civilians who died during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War in the area of Flanders, victims of the Nazis. We will also remember the allied soldier, killed or wounded during the fights, the British and French prisoners killed here in 1940, the civilian victims from Esquelbecq, Wormhout and Ledringhem, the members of the Resistant Movement who died or were killed when they were in concentration camps and also the people who had to suffer during 1562 long

days of occupation, requisition and privation.

The victims of the massacre are buried in the Commonwealth Military Cemetery of Esquelbecq and the local cemetery of Ledringhem and Wormhout.

