

Italy

**Volksbund Deutsche
Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V.**



**Reconciliation above the graves
Work for peace**

German Military Cemeteries



Learn from the Past for the Future!

Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V. is a humanitarian organization charged by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany with recording, maintaining and caring for the graves of German war casualties abroad. The Volksbund provides information to relatives on all matters related to war graves, advises public and private institutions, promotes international cooperation in the area of war grave maintenance and encourages young people to come together to learn at the last resting places of war casualties.

The Volksbund currently has almost 330,000 active supporters. More than one million people take an interest in the organization and also make occasional financial contributions. The Volksbund funds approximately 70 percent of its activities with these contributions and donations, and also with income received from legacies and bequests. It also runs annual collection campaigns both door-to-door and in public spaces. Germany's regional and national government authorities provide the remainder of the funds needed.



In accordance with bilateral agreements, the Volksbund now fulfils this task in Europe and North Africa. The charity currently takes care of 830 war cemeteries and graves in 46 countries, the last resting places of about 2.8 million war casualties. Today, several thousand volunteers and 550 salaried employees deal with the organization's various activities. In consequence of the political revolutions in Eastern Europe, the work of the Volksbund extended to the former Eastern Bloc countries, where around 3 million German soldiers lost their lives in the Second World War - almost twice as many soldiers as those resting in war cemeteries in the other European countries. This harboured huge challenges for the Volksbund: many of the over 100,000 gravesites were difficult to locate, or they had been destroyed, overbuilt or plundered.

Since 1991, the Volksbund has repaired or reconstructed 331 Second World War cemeteries and 188 burial grounds from the First World War in Eastern, Central and Southeast Europe. Over 980,000 war casualties have been reinterred on 83 gravesites. The Volksbund established the "Gedenken und Frieden" - "Peace and Remembrance" - foundation in 2001 in order to safeguard its charitable work in the long term. The Volksbund commemorates the casualties of war through the establishment and maintenance of war cemeteries. These vast burial grounds are a reminder of the past that also confront the living with the consequences of war and violence.

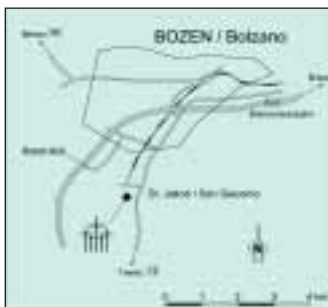
The Volksbund started to organize international youth exchanges and work camps throughout Europe under the motto "Reconciliation above the graves - Work for Peace" in 1953. The education officers in the regional branches collaborate with schools and higher education establishments and carry out projects in war cemeteries both in Germany and internationally.

The four youth exchange and education centres the Volksbund runs in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany provide young people as well as adults taking part in adult education courses with the perfect framework conditions for on-site peace education projects at the local war cemeteries. Around 20,000 youngsters and young adults use these offers every year.

Italy

More than 107,000 dead German soldiers were buried in individual graves, small temporary burial sites or in military graveyards constructed by the Wehrmacht in more than 3,000 locations throughout Italy. Given such a wide distribution of war graves, it was practically impossible to maintain them at a reasonable cost. The war graves agreement entered into between the Federal Republic of Germany and Italy on 22 December 1955 therefore made provision for the German war dead to be consolidated in permanent military graveyards. The department of the German War Graves Commission responsible for the consolidation of graves managed to complete its work in Italy in September 1964 after eight and a half years.

In the First World War fighting in Italy only took place in northern Italy. After a German-Italian war graves agreement had been signed in 1937, the 16,000 plus German soldiers who died found their final resting place in one of seven consecrated military cemeteries constructed by the German War Graves Commission. The military cemetery on the Pordoi-Joch in the Dolomites was only completed after the end of the Second World War; those soldiers who died between 1940 and 1945 are also buried here. Soldiers from the Austro-Hungarian army are also buried in most of these cemeteries.



Bolzano – St. Jakob

The military cemetery “St. Jakob” is located in the south of Bolzano. With 100,000 inhabitants, it is the capital of the autonomous province of Bolzano. Together with Trient it is called the “Trentino Alto – Adige” region (Trient-Oberetsch or Trient/South Tyrol). Alongside 1,734 Austrian-Hungarian victims of the 1st World War, 174 victims of the 2nd World War

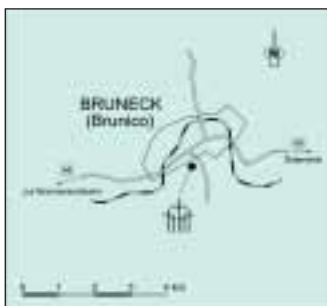
also rest here. Following the expansion of the burial ground in the years 1941 – 1943 they were moved by the official German grave service. On the burial ground there is a column with a sculpture of “St. George fighting against the dragon”. The Military Veterans Association in Bolzano looks after the ground on behalf of the Volksbund.



Brixen

The cemetery of Brixen, located approximately one kilometre to the north of the city, was founded by the former k. and k. troops in the year 1915. Alongside 1,229 Austrian-Hungarian 1st World War victims, there are 106 German war victims from the 2nd World War. Their names are engraved on crosses of natural stone. A symbolic sarcophagus of stone and a

chapel in Tyrolean style which was donated by a relative in memory of his brother, who fell in Galicia, are the centre of the cemetery. The association for the maintenance of the German and Austrian-Hungarian war cemetery looks after it.



Bruneck

At Pustertal, approx. 35 kilometres to the east of Brixen on road 49, 677 Austrian-Hungarian victims of the 1st World War rest alongside 19 German victims of the 2nd World War in a small forest cemetery. The cemetery was opened to the public on 20th September 1959. The women’s committee of the South Tyrolean black cross is responsible for the maintenance of the cemetery.



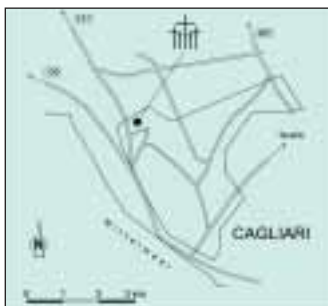
▲ *Bolzano*



▲ *Brixen*

▼ *Bruneck*





Cagliari/Sardinia

435 German 2nd World War victims were buried at the municipal cemetery San Michele, directly near the Italian and British part of the cemetery. At first, 190 victims were buried at the British military cemetery Pembroke on the Isle of Malta, however they were moved to the burial ground in San Michele in 1960. The burial ground of 1,500 square metres, which is divided

into four grave beds, is surrounded by a low hedge of Pittosporum. Both sides of the grave crosses of travertine bear the names, ranks and life data of two dead soldiers respectively. On 3rd June 1961 the cemetery was opened to the public.



Cagliari/Sardinia: One of 435 dead

Serious illness

Friedrich Graf Basselet de la Rosée, born on 24th June 1919, was first lieutenant of the 1st mountain infantry division. He was stationed near to the village of Olbia on Sardinia. On 1st June 1943 he died as a result of a serious infection and he was buried in the local cemetery. All German soldiers buried here during the war were moved to the collective cemetery at Cagliari.

Block 1, grave 187

If stones
could
speak

Cassino

The German war cemetery is located approx. three kilometres to the north of the city Cassino in the village of Caira. Mainly German soldiers who died in hard battles for the Monte-Cassino massif in the year 1944 in Southern Italy have found their resting place there. He who stands in front of the high mountain with the rebuilt monastery and looks over the

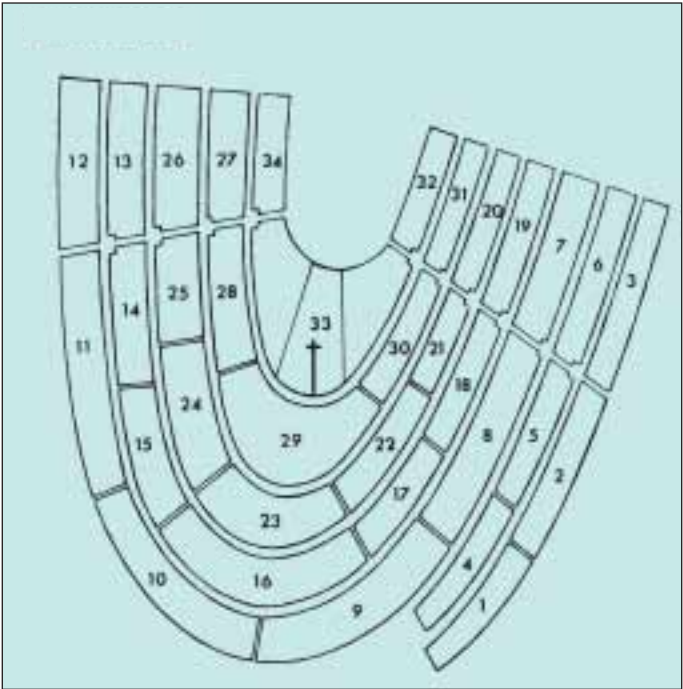


plain and the mountains around should know that people from many different countries fought hard battles here: Germans, Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Canadians, Poles, Italians, people from New Zealand and Indians. Their graves are a reminder of the horrors of war. The German war cemetery was established by the Volksbund from 1959 – 1964 and was opened to the public on 4th May 1965. 20,100 war victims have found their final resting place here.

A broad path uphill leads to the entrance building. The daylight falls through a triangle, which opens up to the sky, onto a sculpture: “Grief



and consolation". Crosses of travertine bear the names, ranks and life data of three dead soldiers respectively on both sides. This cemetery is characterized by cypresses and pines and the separation of the burial ground, planted with St. John's wort, into five arched, upward rising terraces. On the mountain top there is an eleven metres high cross of forging bronze. Behind it there are the companions' graves. Big stone slabs bear the name of those companions who rest here with certainty.



Cassino: One of 20,100 dead

Terrible premonition

Helmut Wiesjahn, born on 4th June 1911, was a preacher in Halbe/Brandenburg until his conscription in the year 1943. His last letter from the front showed his premonition. He advised his family exactly what to do if they were dragged into war. In early 1945 this premonition was confirmed during the battles for the basin of Halbe. Wiesjahn wrote this letter on 5th September 1943; on 9th September his battery was attacked by low-flying planes near Civicilla during the retreat. Although he hid under a truck he was killed by a shot in the head.

Block 8, grave 889

If stones
could
speak

Costermano

The German military cemetery is located on a small ridge to the south of the village Costermano. The ground drops steeply towards the Lake Garda and runs into flat downhill terraces in the East.

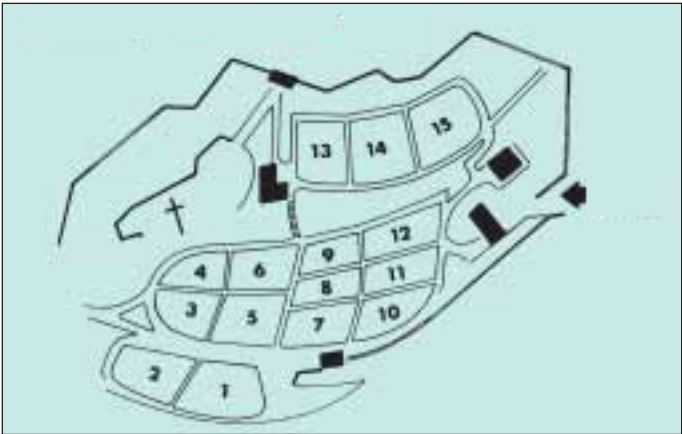
From the ridge with its old cypresses you have a broad view of the landscape: The tops of the Alps in the north, the wine mountains surrounded by cypresses in the east and the south, Lake Garda in the West. The visitor walks through the open hall of the entrance building and a big gate casted of bronze over a broad flight of stairs to a small terrace. From this place he can see nearly the whole cemetery. On the three terraced burial grounds, planted with *Erica darlayensis*, the positions of the different graves are marked by slabs of stone. They bear the names of two dead soldiers respectively. Over a flight of outside steps you reach the companion's grave located at the upper burial grounds. Here is the central monument, a building with a room over the tomb of those soldiers which were tied together inseparably by death.

In front of the companion's grave a young man kneels down, a very impressive bronze statue. In a smaller side room which can be rea-



ched from the memorial room, eight name books of metal lay on the desk of stone, in which all the dead of this cemetery are listed.

Halfway to the surface of the summit there is a small building, which can be used as a vestry at church celebrations. At the covered front side there is a map of ceramics from Northern Italy, which contains the names of the provinces in which the dead who rest here were initially buried. At the highest point of the cemetery – visible from far away – an eight metre high steel cross and a stone altar can be found.



Costermano: One of 22,000 dead

Joint fates

Two young men – a German and an Italian – were born on the same day: 19th December, 1921. One of them, Kurt Richter, was born in Leipzig and the other one, Domenico Tasca, in Nove, Italy. The 2nd World War tragically brought their fates together on 29th April 1945. The 24 year old Kurt Richter was seriously injured during battles at the Brenta river. Domenico Tasco was seriously injured in his stomach by fragments of a hand grenade whilst defending his home village. Both young men lay next to each other in hospital. Domenico's mother discovered the German boy who was born on the same day as her son. She could only try to comfort them and treated them like brothers. Both boys died and she closed their eyes. In memory of this occurrence a memorial stone was erected on the former battle field. Kurt Richter was buried in the military cemetery of Costermano.

If stones
could
speak

Block 2, grave 634

Feltre

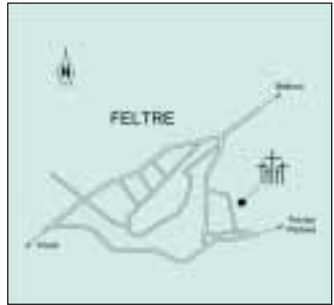
The military cemetery is located on the road Trient – Primolano – Belluno, 30 kilometres away from the province capital Belluno, in the city of Feltre.

The city in the region of the central Piave was an important place behind the front, when, during the last months of the year 1917, the German and Austrian offensive at the Piave and in the

region of the embattled Monte Grappa and Monte Tomba came to a stop. There were a lot of hospitals. German war victims were buried not only in Feltre, but also in many neighbouring villages. All these war gravesites and scattered graves remained open and the remains were moved to Quero. Only the small military cemetery Feltre by the name of “San Paolo”, named after the near church of the 16th century with the same name, continued to exist.

The memorial site recovers 271 war victims, also 68 Austrians. Mainly the wonderful landscape has made the war gravesite into a very special place: Hills with country houses and farms, fields of maize and wine and wooded hills which frame the broad valley. Stone crosses of reddish brown porphyry mark the graves in the lawn surface.

Seen from the access way, the entrance building of limestone is situated on a low embankment. A small arbour of stone, attached to the entrance building, contains a plate with the names of the dead who rest here.





Futa-Pass

The German military cemetery with more than 30,800 2nd World War victims, is located on a hilltop, 40 kilometres to the north of Florence, directly at the Futa-Pass (952 metres high). Down below on the motorway tourists flock south-bound. If you drive on the motorway coming from the north, leave the motorway at the exit Pian del Voglio (no. 16).

You only drive ten kilometres until you reach the cemetery. Coming from the south use the exit Barberino.

At that time, it was difficult to find a place for the planned cemetery in the middle of a former battle field, until this dominating height was chosen. The Futa-Pass was one of the most important military bases of the "Green Line", which was established in the year 1944.



It was also called "Gothic Line". The advance of the allied forces to the north was meant to be prevented. Most of the war victims buried in this cemetery were victims of the British and American offensives against German front lines between Carrar at the Ligurian Sea and the region around Rimini at the Adriatic Sea at the end of August 1944.



After hard defensive fighting the Apennines defence broke down at the end of April 1945.

From the entrance yard you reach a gate. The burial ground begins behind it. The building concept bases on the idea of a never ending spiral: A 2,000 metre long wall with a parallel footpath runs into uphill spirals and encloses the graves of the dead on terraces. It ends in a wall disc rising steeply into the sky.



67 natural stone crosses rise from the wall surface in large intervals. The last spiral of the wall forms a memorial place. The crypt with the companion's grave is located below. After moving the dead, the Volksbund erected the memorial stones of the troops, which were still in good condition, in the Cervia room beside the crypt in memory of the closed German military cemetery at Cervia. The burial ground in terrace form has been divided into 72 different big grave blocks. 10,000 lying grave signs of grey granite for two to four victims respectively mark the graves. It was opened to the public on 28th June 1969.

Futa-Pass: One of 30,800 dead

Victim of partisans

On 21st April 1945 Oberschütze Heinrich Johann received, together with his company, the order to clear an ammunition depot in the south-east of the village S. Giovanni in Persiceto. An air scout of the allied forces forced them to take cover. Once the plane had disappeared the soldiers found out that two of their companions had been killed and robbed by partisans in the meantime. One of them was Heinrich Johann. Due to the approaching allied forces the dead could not be buried. Later Heinrich Johann was moved by the Volksbund to the Futa-Pass as the Unknown Soldier. Only in 1989 could he be identified, due to a grave investigation application by his grandson.

**If stones
could
speak**

Block 7, grave 490

Meran

In the year 1943 the German Wehrmacht established the military cemetery at Meran in order to establish a gravesite for the German soldiers who died in more than thirty military hospitals. In 1956 the Volksbund moved more German war victims and expanded the cemetery in the following years.

On 13th September 1959 it was opened to the public. 1,058 German war victims have found their last resting place here.



The German war gravesite – next to the Austrian-Hungarian military cemetery of the 1st World War with 1,528 war victims – is surrounded by a wall of porphyry. You enter the cemetery walking through an entrance building in an arcade construction which opens towards the cemetery side. The German and the Austrian military cemeteries are connected by a high cross with a sculpture of St. George, the dragon killer, on the one side and the relief of a Pieta on the side which points to the Austrian burial ground. On the whole burial ground there are porphyry crosses in groups of three. Lying name stones with two names respectively mark the graves on the lawn.

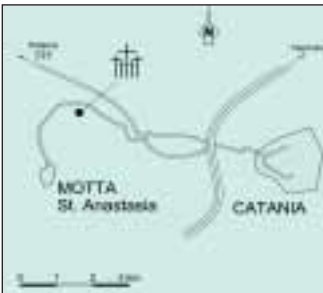


Meran: One of 1,058 dead

Unknown dead

In early May 1945 three soldiers who tried to escape from the advancing allied forces found a dead person in civilian clothes at the Brenner pass. The dead man was buried in the municipal cemetery Gossensaß in South Tyrol and the men took his personal things away with them. After they returned from American and Russian captivity in 1948 they handed over the personal things to the CID in Augsburg. A retired detective superintendent tried to find the grave in the cemetery of Gossensaß in 1980. However, he did not succeed. All the dead had been moved to the war gravesite at Meran in the meantime. The personal data of the “unknown”, who was buried in Meran, was compared and checked and some years later Paul Savini (grave 792) was identified.

**If stones
could
speak**



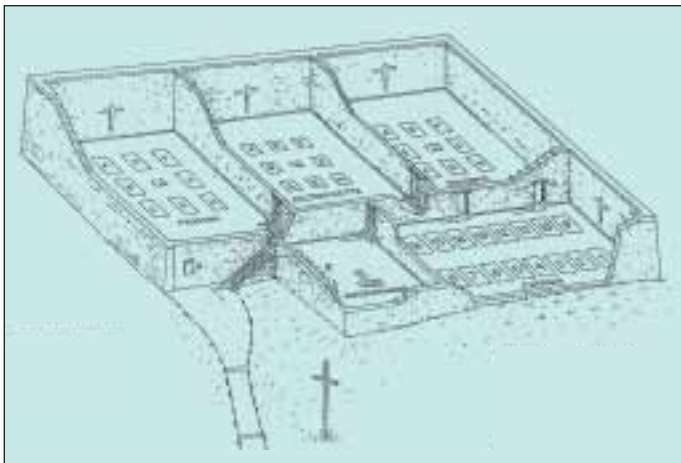
Motta – St. Anastasia / Catania

The German war gravesite which is located eight kilometres to the west of Catania is located over a valley, in the centre of one of the most beautiful landscapes of Sicily. It is characterized by the massif of the Mount Etna, the highest still active volcano of Europe.

The cemetery was established as a tomb building in whose non-accessible basement the sarcophagi of the victims can be found. The moving service of the Volksbund moved war casualties from all parts of Sicily. 4,561 German war casualties have found their final resting place there.



Over a flight of stairs the visitor reaches the forecourt and then the yard of the companion's grave. A natural stone slab bears the names of 28 known and 3 unknown German soldiers, who rest here in one tomb. A further eight stone slabs bear the names of 128 German soldiers who died in Sicily in the years 1941 – 1944, their graves, however, could not be found up to now. The centre of this yard is an impressive bronze sculpture in the form of a dying young man. From this place you can reach four other yards. Slabs of natural stone bear the names of the war victims. On 25th September 1965 the cemetery was opened to the public.



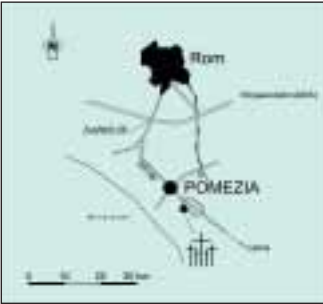
Motta – St. Anastasia: One of 4,561 dead

Every day a gift

“.... every day you survived is a day you gain for your life. This feeling is the strongest when you return and land from an enemy flight at dawn. You have the impression that the gift of life has been given to you again.” Franz Black wrote this to his parents on 4th July 1943. In the night from 6th to 7th July he flew again from Frosinone to Malta and the Straits of Sicily for scout purposes. The machine was pursued and shot at by night fighter jets and crashed into the Lisandro Mountain on the Isle of Marettimo. The crew of the Ju 88 was buried by the inhabitants of the isle. In 1965 the Volksbund moved the dead to the war gravesite in Motta – St. Anastasia.

**If stones
could
speak**

Tomb 1, slab E, grave 78



Pomezia

The German military cemetery is located to the west of the road Latina – Rome, at the SS 148, the Via Pontina, approx. 26 kilometres to the southeast of Rome. On the horizon you can see the Mountains of Albania. In the south you can see the former battle field of Aprilia and then the coastal plain of the drained Pontine Marshes.

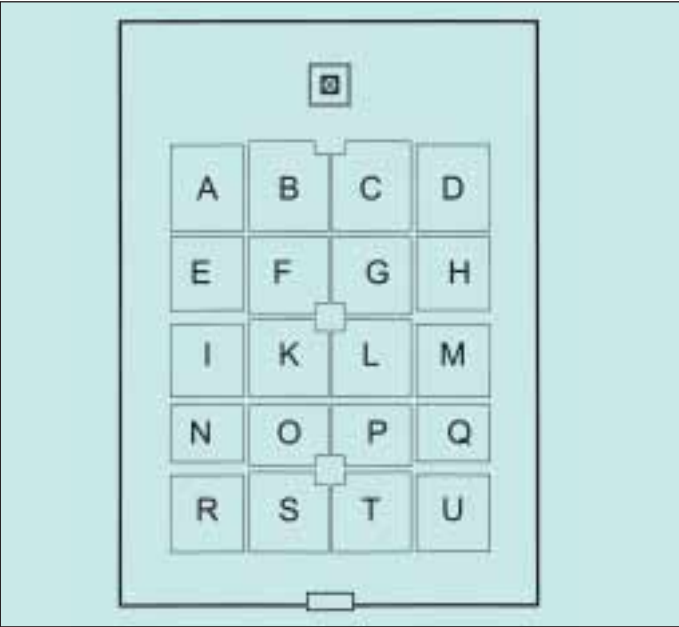
During heavy fighting at the beachhead of Anzio-Nettuno the Americans established a big military cemetery for friends and enemies at the northern exit of the city of Nettuno. In early 1947 2,740 German war victims who had been buried there were moved to Pomezia at the instigation of the American grave service, since the ground of Pomezia was more suitable for a permanent war gravesite. In December 1946 the piece of land was made available by the Italian state free of charge.



By request and with the support of the general police station of that time, 3,751 German war victims could be recovered from field graves of the former beachhead Anio-Nettuno by the German grave service. Afterwards they were buried at Pomezia. In the years 1948 – 1955 the Volksbund buried a further 10,704 German war victims here coming from the municipal cemeteries of the provinces of Rome, Latina, Avellino, Frosinone, L'Aquila, Chieti, Siena and Pistoia.

After the conclusion of the German-Italian War Graves Agreement of 22nd December

1955, German war victims from the provinces of Ancona, Arezzo, Ascoli, Grosseto, Latina, Livorno, Macerata, Naples, Perugia, Pesaro, Rieti, Rome, Siena, Terni, Viterbo and Reggio di Calabria were also moved to the cemetery at Pomezia. Altogether 27,500 German soldiers have found their final resting place at Pomezia. The expansion of the military cemetery was carried out until the end of the fifties according to the plans of the Site Management of the Volksbund. If you leave the entrance building you follow a straight path with paving stones. You pass the grave fields and reach the central monument, which was built over the tomb of the companion's grave. Four strong columns support a canopy, the bottom of which is covered with mosaics. The central column has the form of a sculpture: four huge soldiers and family members. The grave fields with crosses of natural stone are surrounded by groups of pines. The cemetery was opened to the public on 6th May 1960.



Pomezia: One of 27,500 dead

Death in a hole in the ground

As a driver of an assault gun, Horst Kunstmann and his companions are near Ambra on 7th July 1944. He died in a fire attack by a piece of shrapnel in his head, although he took cover in a hole in the ground. His battery buried him in a field grave. Employees of the Volksbund moved his mortal remains to the military cemetery at Pomezia.

Block T, grave 1103

**If stones
could
speak**



Pordoi

In the middle of the huge mountains of the Dolomites the Volksbund established a war gravesite for those killed in action during the hard mountain battles of the 1st World War. It is located directly at the Pordoi pass. Here, at a height of approx. 2,239 meters, the visitor can see the top of the Col di Lana, only some kilometres away, and behind it the former front area of the Ampezan

Dolomites and in the south the ice of the Marmolata (3,342 m).



The building of the war gravesite Pordoi had already been started before the 2nd World War. The crypt had already been finished by the Volksbund. Inside the crypt 8,582 Austrian and German victims of the 1st World War had found their resting place. The 2nd World War stopped the building work. In 1956 the work was continued and the victims of the 2nd World War were buried in ground graves. The building is divided into three clearly recognizable stages. A wide round wall with a diameter of 54 metres encloses an earth ring with a width of 8.5 metres, in which 849 victims of the 2nd World War rest. The second stage is a more than five metre high round wall with a diameter of 30 metres. The third stage is located in its middle: An 8.5 metre high octagonal body. At the upper edge of this octagon there are three thin noddges on each side which light the inside room as a kind of light frieze. In the middle of the hall, the floor of which consists of porphyry plates, there is a flaming bowl on a platform. On the side walls there are huge figures of grieving soldiers consisting of muschelkalk. The cemetery was opened to the public on 19th September 1959.



Pordoi: One of 9,431 dead

Wounded during a scout patrol

Sergeant Otto Karl was seriously injured during a scout patrol on 28th April 1944. On the way to the hospital at Feltre he was seriously hurt and finally died. On 29th April he was buried at the cemetery Feltre and he was later moved to the military cemetery at Pordoi by employees of the Volksbund.

Grave 660

If stones
could
speak

Quero

The memorial site Quero is located on the Col Maor over the Piave Valley and can be seen from far away. Due to the international treaty of 2nd June 1936 in which all questions concerning the War Grave Service Association were regulated between the two countries on the basis of a mutual agreement, the Volksbund established the war gravesite in Quero in three years. It was opened to the public on 25th May 1939.

At the war gravesite in Quero 3,463 1st World War victims of the German and Austrian-Hungarian army have found their resting place. The outward form of the monument of Quero is characteristic for the landscape. A tower with a flight of small stairs contains a memorial room for the war victims. A double cordon which connects the tower





with the bastion by a flat arch from the one side represents a trench. From the other side, the tower and the bastion are connected by a straight wall, which, together with the inside wall of the trench and one part of the tower encloses the companion's grave planted with Cotoneaster.

If you enter the memorial room you are in a room in the form of a bell, which is indirectly lighted by a light well, which penetrates the bell or more exactly the cross-vault at the point of intersection of a reinforcing rib. The relatively bright room is dominated by a black stone block, a lectern of Swedish granite decorated with ornaments.

Quero: One of 3,463 dead

Monte Tomba/South Tyrol

Emil Schneider, born on 9th October 1895 in Duisburg, was called up to the German-Medal-Regiment in Allenstein in 1915. He fought in the fighter battalion in South Tyrol.

On 22nd November 1917 he died during hard mountain battles at the Monte Tomba. He was buried in Santa Maria to the north of Quero and was later moved to Quero.

**If stones
could
speak**



Milis / Sardinia

In the municipal cemetery 16 German and 30 Italian war victims rest beside an old listed church in a small collective cemetery. The soldiers died during an air attack on the former airfield Milis in June 1943.

Milis / Sardinia: One of 16 dead

In the companion's grave

Saturday, 3rd July 1943, late afternoon:
Enemy forces attack the airfield Milis on Sardinia. Lieutenant Konrad Jung, born on 16th February 1915, successfully fended off the first offensive with his anti-aircraft battery. Half an hour later a second offensive followed and one of the last bombs hit the anti-aircraft position. Jung died immediately. Together with ten other soldiers he was buried in the companion's grave in the cemetery at Milis.

If stones
could
speak

Memorial site for the submarine crew

In the south of Italy, 15 1st World War marine soldiers have found their final resting place at the municipal cemetery of Taranto. It is the crew of the submarine 12, which was sunk in the harbour of Taranto on 12th March 1916. The communal grave is located directly at the entrance of the municipal cemetery.



Cemetery	Buried fallen	
	1st World War	2nd World War
Bolzano	2 062	174
Bressanone	1 229	106
Brunico	793	25
Cagliari		435
Cassino		20 100
Costermano		22 000
Feltre	271	
Passo della Futa		30 800
Merano	1528	1 058
Milis		46
Motta - St. Anastasia		4 561
Pomezia		27 500
Pordoi	8 582	849
Quero	3 463	
Total	17 928	107 654

The German War Graves Commission ...

- ... cares for the German war graves here in France and nearly 100 countries all over the world.
- ... helps the next of kin in finding out about their relatives' fate and searches for their graves.
- ... works in the Eastern European countries since 1990 when the borders were opened.
- ... finds the war dead and brings them to central cemeteries.
- ... advocates through its work understanding and reconciliation with former enemies.
- ... leads young people to war graves in order to make them understand the terrible consequences of war such recognizing how important it is to work for peace.
- ... finances its work almost exclusively with contributions of its members and donors and would be very grateful for YOUR help.

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