



## THE WAR CEMETERIES OF REICHSWALD FOREST AND RHEINBERG, GERMANY



*Reichswald Forest War Cemetery*

### **REICHSWALD FOREST WAR CEMETERY, CLEVES (KLEVE)**

This cemetery lies within the Reichswald Forest and on the road between Kleve (Cleves) in Germany and Gennep in the Netherlands, on the German side of the border, about 5 kilometres south-west of Kleve and 10 kilometres from Gennep. It is the largest Commonwealth cemetery of either world war, in terms of area, and contains 7,654 graves. The architect was Philip Hepworth.

After the end of the War in 1945, thousands of graves of soldiers and airmen were brought from burials places in western Germany to lie in the Reichswald. Many of the soldiers who rest here perished in the grim battle of the Rhineland. Some fought and died in the advance through the forest itself in February 1945. Many others died in the crossing of the Rhine, among them men of the airborne forces whose bodies were brought from Hamminkeln, where a landing was made by the 6th British Airborne Division from bases in England.

Nearly 4,000 airmen are buried in the cemetery. Some lost their lives in supporting the advance into Germany, but most died in earlier years of the war, in the intensive air attacks on German targets, and were brought to the Reichswald from cemeteries and isolated burial places in the neighbouring area. The soldiers' graves lie to the right, the airmen's to the left, as one enters the cemetery at the north-west boundary.

Two shelter buildings near the entrance are built in warm Oberkirchner stone, as are the two smaller shelters at the opposite boundary, and on the piers at each entrance are set a lion and unicorn carved in Portland stone by Gilbert Ledward. Flights of granite steps lead to the upper floors, from which there are extensive views over the cemetery. The shelters stand on the edge of a wide sweep of turf and on the north-east and south-west there are stone archways with low wing walls. The altar-like Stone of Remembrance designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens stands near the centre of the cemetery. Upon it are carved the words from the Book of Ecclesiasticus: THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE. Beyond, a wide avenue leads to the Cross of Sacrifice, which stands at the south-east boundary against the forest background. Like the Stone of Remembrance, the Cross is common to most Commonwealth war cemeteries. It was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and is set upon an octagonal base and bears a bronze sword upon its shaft.



*The Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery*

## **RHEINBERG WAR CEMETERY**

Rheinberg is a small town on the fringe of the industrial Ruhr, 5 kilometres from the western bank of the River Rhine, 24 kilometres north of Krefeld and 13 kilometres south of Wesel. The War Cemetery is about 3 kilometres south-west of the centre of the town on the road to Kamp-Lintfort.

Most of the 3,335 casualties who rest in the cemetery were airmen who died throughout the war years in bombing attacks on Germany. Their graves were brought from cemeteries in Düsseldorf, Krefeld, Mönchengladbach, Essen, Cologne, Aachen, Dortmund and many other places in the area. Some were first buried in isolated graves where their aircraft crashed; by a roadside, a river bank, in a garden or a forest. From one town alone, Cologne, over 450 Air Force casualties who had been buried by the Germans were reburied here.

There are also over 400 soldiers buried in the cemetery. Many lost their lives in the Battle of the Rhineland and the advance from the Rhine to the Elbe, among them men who died in the capture of the heavily fortified town of Goch in February 1945 and others who fell in the stubborn fighting for Lingen, which was cleared by the 3rd Division on 6 April.



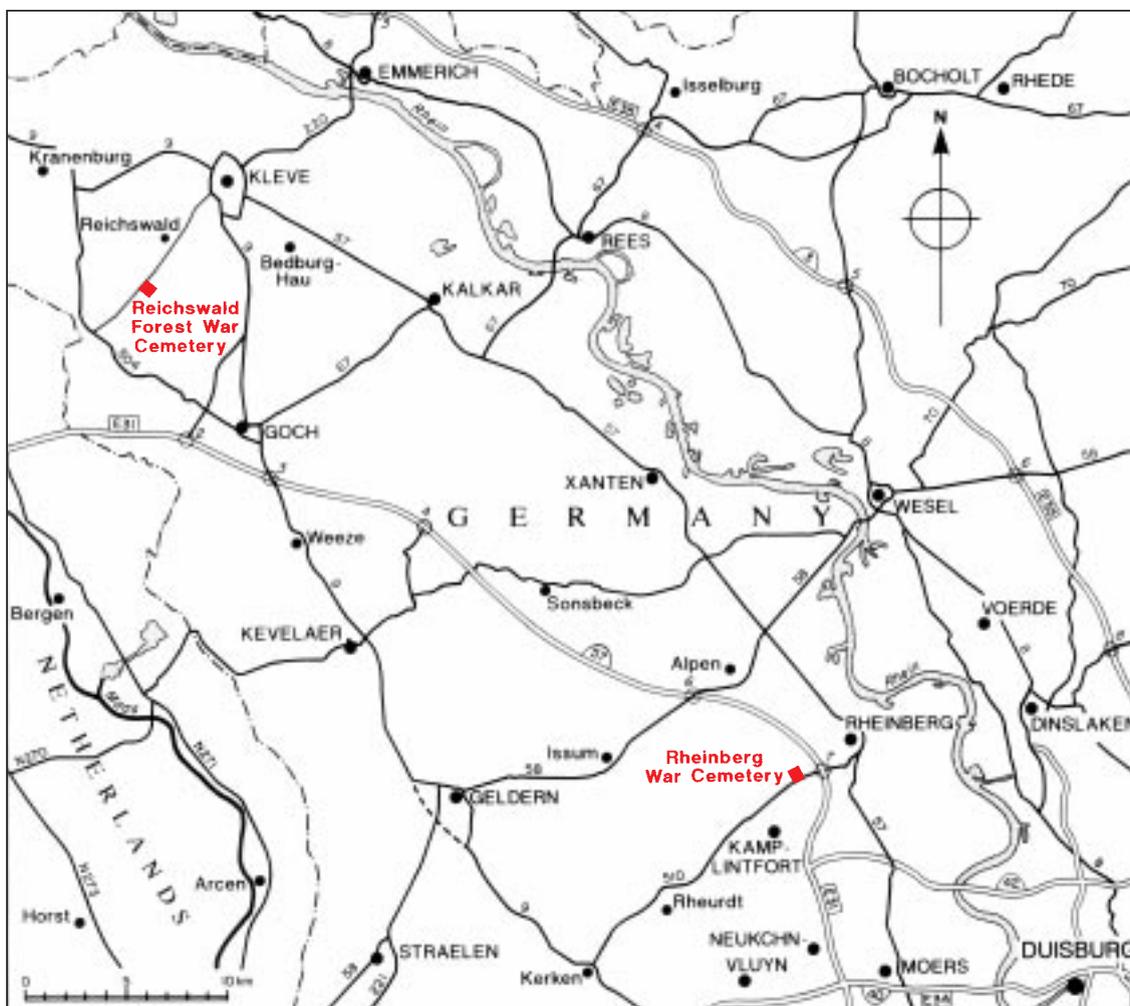
*View of Rheinberg War Cemetery from the entrance*

Fourteen seamen of the Merchant Navy are buried here and there are two graves of sailors of the Royal Navy.

Designed by Philip Hepworth and first opened in 1946, the cemetery is pleasantly sited in agricultural land protected on the north, east and west by neighbouring woods. It is formal in design; wrought-iron gates in a wide entrance open to a central turfed avenue where the Stone of Remembrance and Cross of Sacrifice stand. These monuments are described in the notes on Reichswald Forest War Cemetery. A shelter on each side of the Stone and a colonnade beyond the Cross are built of Oberkirchner stone. A second avenue stretches across the cemetery from the south-west to the north-east boundaries, where semi-circular stone seats are placed.



*Rheinberg War Cemetery*



## CASUALTY STATISTICS BY FORCES

	Reichswald					Rheinberg						
	NAVY	ARMY	AIR FORCE	MISC	TOTAL	NAVY	ARMY	AIR FORCE	M.N.	MISC	TOTAL	
UK		18	3634	2759	2	6413	2	413	2027	14	3	2459
Canadian		-	1	705	-	706	-	-	516	-	-	516
Australian		-	-	328	-	328	-	-	240	-	-	240
New Zealand		-	-	127	-	127	-	-	104	-	-	104
South African		-	1	-	-	1	-	3	2	-	-	5
Indian		-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Belgian		-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands		-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Polish		-	9	64	-	73	-	-	8	-	-	8
USA		-	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1
Yugoslavian		-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norwegian		-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Entirely Unidentified		-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	1
<b>Totals</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>3647</b>	<b>3985</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7654</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>417</b>	<b>2898</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3335</b>

*The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for marking and maintaining the graves of members of the forces of Commonwealth countries who died in the two world wars, for building and maintaining memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown and for providing records and registers of these burials and commemorations, totalling 1.7 million and found in most countries throughout the world.*