

The Sandbostel Camp Cemetery

In the summer of 1945, the Soviet military administration had a monument to the Soviet prisoners who died in the camp erected in the Sandbostel cemetery. When the cemetery was remodeled in 1949, the rows of graves for the Soviet dead were combined to form collective graves that took up less space on the surface. In 1956 the Soviet monument was demolished on the order of the Bremervörde district authorities and the Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior because of contention over the number of victims given on the monument. The same year, the reburial of the bodies of almost 3,000 concentration camp prisoners in the Sandbostel cemetery was completed.

The remains of most other non-Soviet POWs were transferred to their home countries. The bodies of Italians were interred in the Italian Memorial Cemetery at Hamburg-Öjendorf.

Today there are about 170 individual graves of Polish, Yugoslav, and unknown POWs in the Sandbostel cemetery.

Since the war, national veterans' associations, associations of former POWs and associations of concentration camp survivors, above all the Amicale Internationale de Neuengamme, have been campaigning to keep the memory of the Sandbostel camp alive and to maintain the graves of the camp's victims in a dignified state. Caring for the graves has been the responsibility of the Federal State of Lower Saxony since 1946. Since 1973 the cemetery has been maintained on behalf of the Federal State by the Sandbostel council.

Photographer: Andreas Ehresmann, September 23, 2004 (DGLS).

The Sandbostel POW Camp Museum and Memorial

In 2005 the Sandbostel Camp Foundation acquired a part of the former camp area with nine historical buildings. In 2007, the huts were secured, and in 2008 the restoration work itself was begun. Also in 2007, a temporary museum was set up inside one of the post-war buildings. In the coming years, a newly designed permanent exhibition on the history and complex legacy of the Sandbostel POW and reception camp for concentration camp prisoners will be developed.

Photographer: Heinz Giler, 1955 (DGLS).



Sandbostel Prisoner-of-War Camp Museum and Memorial



Memorial | English



The Sandbostel Camp



The Second World War started with the German invasion of Poland in September 1939. One of the prisoner-of-war camps set up on German territory was Mannschafts-Stammlager B in Military District X (Hamburg) in Sandbostel. The first prisoners of war to be taken to the newly-established camp situated in a remote stretch of moorland between the Elbe and Weser rivers were several thousand Poles. Until the end of the war in April, 1945, hundreds of thousands of people from many different countries were held there. Most of them were POWs from Belgium, France, Britain, Yugoslavia, Poland, and the Soviet Union, but there were also Italian military internees, members of the British Merchant Navy, fighters from the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and, towards the end, about ten thousand concentration camp prisoners. Some of the prisoners were held in the camp for only a few days, others for years.

The POWs were sent to production facilities all over northern Germany for forced labor in the German wartime economy.

Thousands of prisoners died from hunger, disease, exhaustion, and maltreatment. Especially hard hit were the Soviet POWs who were taken to Sandbostel in the winter of 1941/42, and the prisoners from Neuengamme concentration camp who arrived in April and May 1945. The dead were buried in the cemetery located about two kilometers (1.2 miles) east of the camp itself. The number of victims is still not conclusively known. Estimates range from 8,000 to 50,000 dead.



The British Army liberated the camp on April 29th, 1945. At the end of May, British soldiers burned down parts of the camp to prevent the spread of a typhoid epidemic. From June 1945 until 1948, thousands of SS officers and Nazi party officials were interned in the Sandbostel camp. Between 1952 and 1960, the remaining huts served as a transit camp for young refugees from East Germany. In 1974, those parts of the camp area which had not been reconverted into farmland were turned into the Immenhain Commercial Park. Most of the 23 remaining buildings from the period of the POW camp have been protected under national historical preservation laws since 1992. *Photos: photographer unknown, undated (International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, Switzerland); photographer: Andreas Ehresmann, June 11, 2007 (Sandbostel POW Camp Museum and Memorial); photographer unknown, 2003 (GLL, Bremervörde Land Registry Office).*



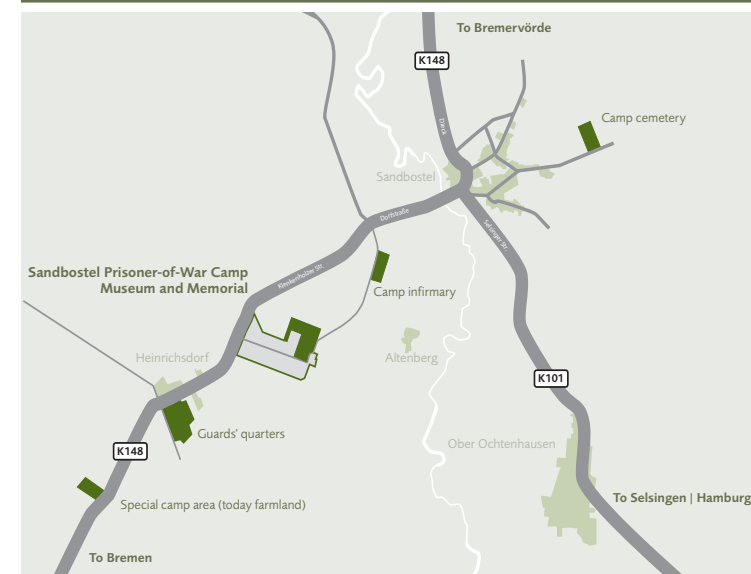
Museum opening times:

Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.
Admission is free.
The Foundation's grounds
(part of the former camp territory) are always open.

Library and archive on the history of the Sandbostel camp:
open Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM
at prior notice.

Photographer unknown (taken by a Wehrmacht photographer), circa 1940 (Sandbostel POW Camp Museum and Memorial); Photo (detail) by Andreas Ehresmann, June 11, 2007 (Sandbostel POW Camp Museum and Memorial).

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