

1940 in the ARDENNES

between the rivers **Chiers and Aisne**





VILLY - LA FERTÉ

Built between 1935 and 1939, the fort at La Ferté is the last bastion on the end of the Maginot Line. It consists of 2 combat block-houses linked by an underground passage.

After the German break-through at Sedan on 13th May 1940 and after the French retreat from the fortified line on the Chiers river on 14th May, the Germans occupied the SW (?) hills, surrounded and took the village of Villy and came into contact with the fort's defences. On the 18th May at 6pm they attacked block 2 with explosives, blew up the firing slits of the armoured domes and overturned the retractable turret through which they dropped charges which immobilised the defenders. 107 French soldiers perished there on 19th May.

107 French soldiers perished there on 19th May.



Villy-la Ferté

Visits:

The Maginot line fort at **Villy-La Ferté**

Guided tours: Easter > 1st Nov: Sundays and public holidays 14h - 17h

July - August: Tues > Sunday 14h-17h
(tour lasts 1h 30 mins.)

☎ 03 24 22 65 36

Saint Walfroy: Hermitage
Cocagne Gardens at **La Ferté**



**MALANDRY
INOR**

On the 14th May the French army abandoned the fortified line behind the Chiers river and withdrew to a line Villy-la-Ferté -Inor which allowed the Germans to advance as far as Inor. On the 15th, the artillery dug in at Martincourt halted this advance. On the 16,17 & 18th May repeated attacks and counter attacks took place notably in the forest. Inor was recaptured by the French on 19th May.

Losses were heavy on both sides in that 'Leafy Hell'.

Relief Legionnaires and North African troops took over: fighting continued from 22nd to the 26th May. By 27th May, the German offensive was contained until the French order to withdraw on 10th June.

attacks and counter attacks in that 'Leafy Hell'.



The Meuse Valley about NOR



Stèles dans les bois d'INOR

AUX HÉROS TOMBÉS
DANS LES BOIS
D'INOR



LANEUVILLE BEAUMONT BEAUFORT

On the 14th May, a Colonial Division was in the Beaumont-Dieulet Forest sector. On the 15th, supported by tanks, they reached the Meuse river opposite Mouzon but were ordered to withdraw on 16th to cover the Inor-Dieulet Forest sector. On the 18th, a fierce German attack was halted, notably at Gaudron Bridge. On the 19th, the Ferme des Tuileries was retaken.

On the 23rd, the German s advanced towards Sommauthe but a French counter attack on the 24th retook the lost ground. The French held their positions until 9th June. On the evening of the 10th the order to withdraw was received: reluctantly the French retreated.

**“the order to
withdraw was
received”**



Pont Gaudron



VISIT :

STENAY :

The Brewery Museum

BEAUMONT EN ARGONNE :

Late 17th Century arcades- Church
with 17th Century Alter. St. John
the Baptist Chapel - remains of the
12th Century ramparts.

About STONNE

The Tour of the Stonne Battlefield

50km long, indicated by signs and with 15 information "totem-poles" all along it, the tour goes through the villages of STONNE, LES GRANDES ARMOISES, LE MONT DIEU, TANNAY, SY, VERRIÈRES, OCHES, SAINT PIERREMONT, SOMMAUTHE, LA BESACE, LA BERLIÈRE.



SEE :

STONNE :

- The memorial - the heavy B1 tank
- orientation table
- wall with information and map
- the sugarloaf: viewing point
- modern church: frescos & stained glass by Calka.

SAINT PIERREMONT :

- XIIIth century Church
- the birthplace of Dom Mabillon
- Viewing points at Isly & La Polka Farms

MONT DIEU :

- The Chartreuse
- the Great Oak tree
- the forest

TANNAY :

- Restored XV & XVIth century church

LE CHESNE :

- Lake Bairon
- international camp-site
- sailing centre
- The Ardennes canal & locks



Stonne. Frescos by Calka



Mont Dieu



Tannay



Bairon

THE BATTLE FOR STONNE

STONNE :



ON 13TH MAY 1940, German Infantry crossed the Meuse river; on the 14th May the Panzer Divisions started their race to the North Sea. To protect this offensive they needed to widen their positions to the south.

This southern movement was blocked by a line of wooded hilltops, the highest of which is STONNE. The village of Stonne became the objective of a tank and infantry battle which was to last from the 15th to the 18th May. Reduced to ruins, it finally fell to German troops but they were unable to move much further.

From 19th to 23rd May there was continuous fighting below the Mont Damion, on the Stonne plateau and on the edge of the Mont Dieu Forest.

On 23rd May, the German offensive, supported by an unprecedented concentration of artillery, took the Mont Damion and the Stonne plateau but was held up outside Les Grandes Armoises and Oches.



LE MONT DAMION



Chars : Bataille de STONNE



Monument de la réconciliation,
STONNE



TANNAY :

On the 16th May the Germans moved round the Mont Dieu Tannay fell. However the attempted encircling movement failed.

massif and slipped behind the canal.

They tried in vain to cross the canal and the river. On the 23rd, in a coordinated offensive they moved behind the French lines between Tannay and the Mont Dieu and captured hill 276. For three days they were to exert enormous pressure in the sector, taking Tannay in house to house fighting and moving round hill 276. But the French counter attacks, supported by armour and artillery contained them. Despite this heroic defence



TANNAY :
- Restored XV & XVIth century church

captured hill 276



OCHES - SOMMAUTHE :

On the 24th May * German forces managed to cross the French lines in the Dieulet Forest and threatened Oches & Sommauthe, but they were checked by French units who defended their positions with fearsome energy. The French order to pull back, given on the evening of 10th June, was disconcerting to the troops but the danger of being surrounded was obvious.

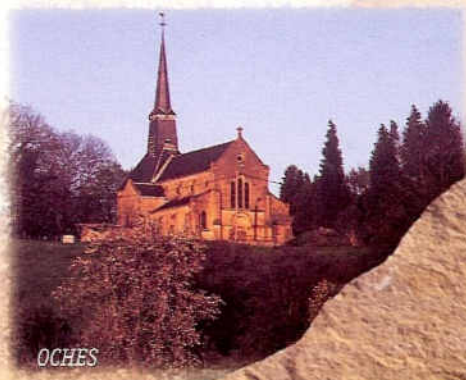
* by this date German troops were near Rouen on the river Seine.



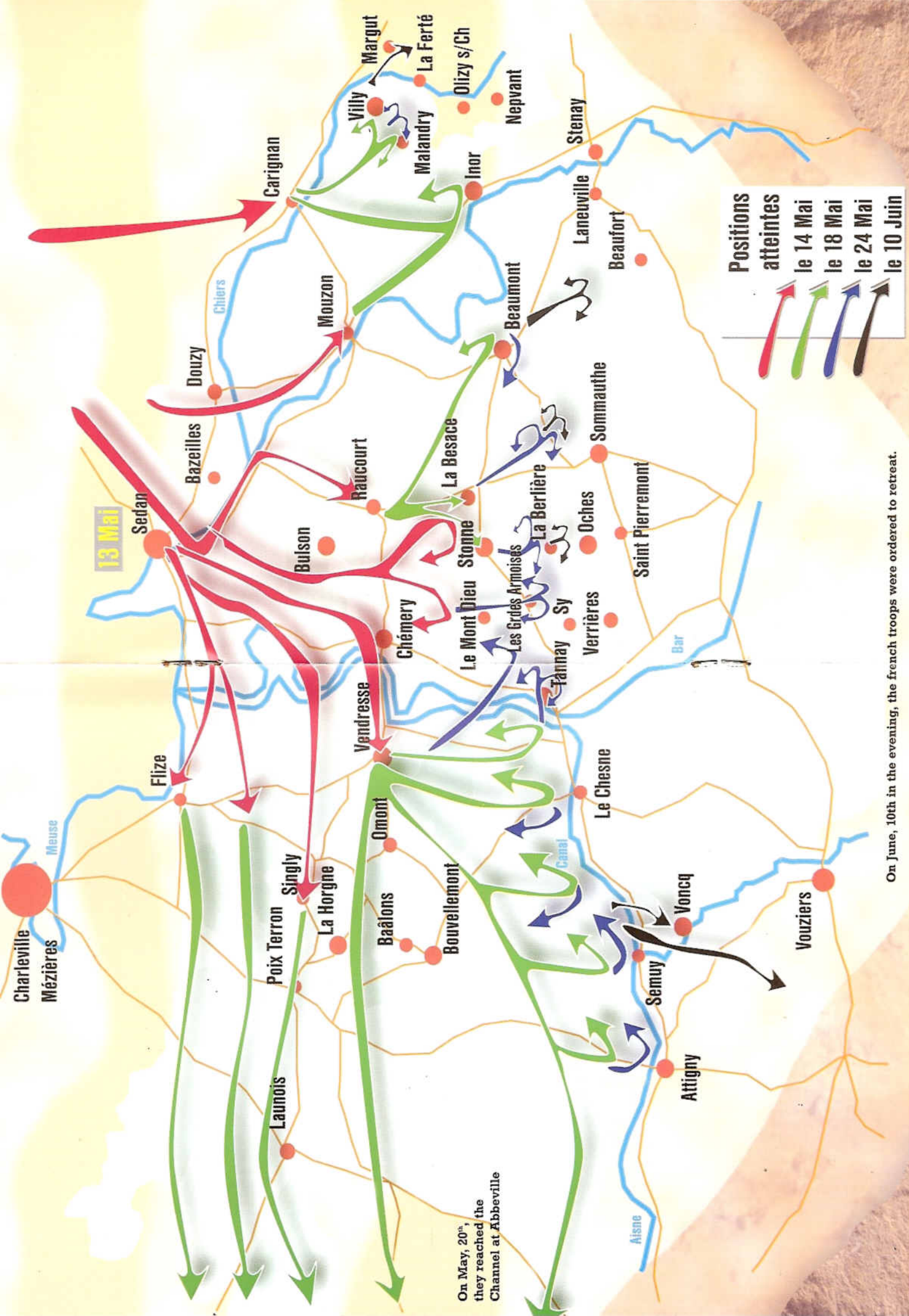
Sommauthe



Pileuse de mil
sénégalaise



OCHES





CHÉMERY SUR BAR BULSON

On 12th May 1940, a French counter attack was launched with light tanks to push back the German Panzers and artillery who were advancing south. Started at Chémery, this attack soon met with German heavy tanks and motorized artillery at Connage & Bulson. Two thirds of the light tanks were destroyed. The infantry which survived

pulled back to Artaise & the Mont Dieu. Chémery was taken so quickly that supporting Stukas bombed their own troops (including senior officers) when attacking the village at midday. The French Chasseurs regiment sustained heavy casualties in their defence of the bridges over the Bar river and the Mazarin Forest.

Light tanks... heavy casualties

A VOIR CHÉMERY :

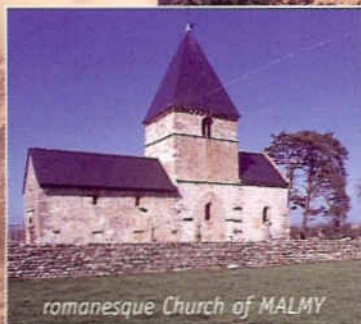
listed Romanesque Church
(XII & XIII Centuries) with tombstone
of the Lords of Coucy
The Halles built in 1856
Viewpoint at Naumont
overlooking the Bar valley
Studio of the painter Pierre Dehaye

CONNAGE : Lime tree commemorating
the Peace of Vervins 1598

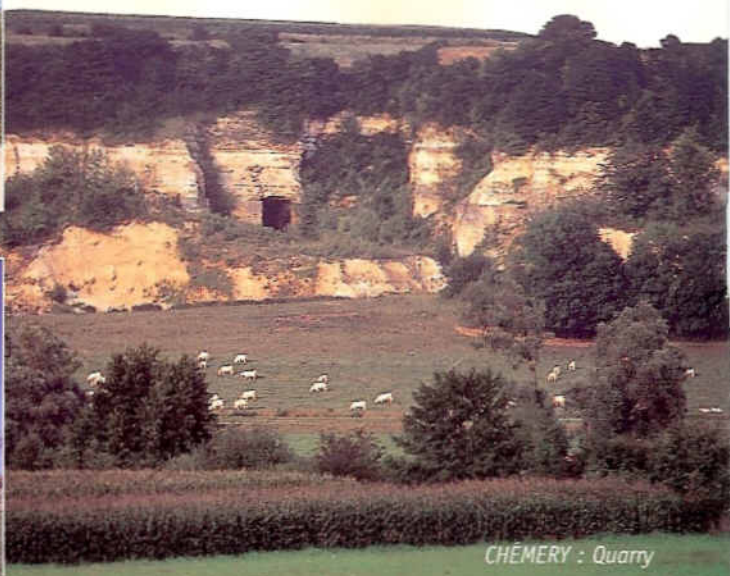
MALMY : Romanesque Church in open country.



romanesque Church of CHÉMERY



romanesque Church of MALMY



CHÉMERY : Quarry



LA HORGNE

On the 14th May, Algerian & Moroccan Spahis, having pulled back to Omont, received the order to hold La Horgne at all costs in order to hold up the advance of the 1st Panzer Division and to protect the infantry divisions stationed at Bâalons & Poix Terron. In the village, transformed into a besieged camp with barricades & trenches, the Spahis put up heroic resistance throughout the 15th

May. Several attacks were repulsed; numerous tanks were destroyed. But at 6pm the Germans captured the blazing village. The Algerian & Moroccan Spahis lost 600 men here in the one day (15th May).

... Hold
at
all costs

A VOIR

LA HORGNE :

The Museum - The Spahis War memorial- the military graveyard, the walk to the orientation table.

OMONT :

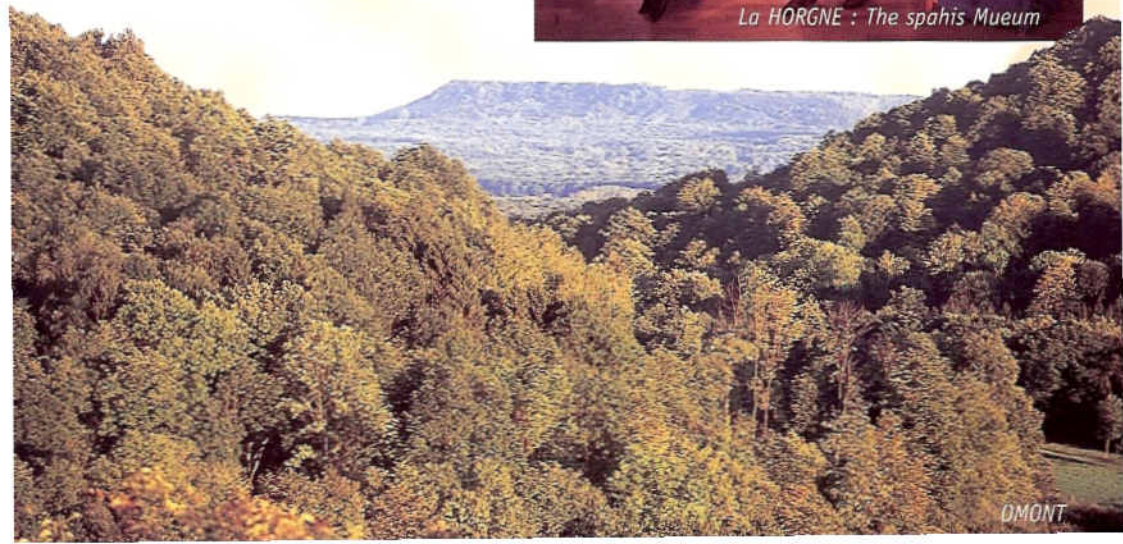
picturesque village and castle ruins

LOUVERGNY :

" Rencontres Musicales " festival in August .



La HORGNE : The spahis Mueum





VONCQ - ATTIGNY RETHEL

The French had set up a line of defence behind the river Aisne & behind the Ardennes canal from Le Chesne to Semuy, blocking the German offensive. From 17th to 20th May, the German advance was held up at Rethel. At Attigny, on 21st May, the German pressure was such that the French forces had to abandon the Faubourg du Moulin sector and pull back behind the river.

In the German general offensive of the 9th

June, supported by Panzer Divisions released by the fall of Dunkirk, the Aisne river is crossed between Château Porcien & Rethel. On 9th & 10th June, French tanks attack at Voncq & at Vandy to stop the German push.

Furious street fighting took place in Rethel which was heavily shelled by artillery of both armies. The Germans advance towards Avançon. The Panzers broke through & sped towards Rheims and Châlons.

On the evening of 10th June French forces received the order to pull back.

Furious fighting...

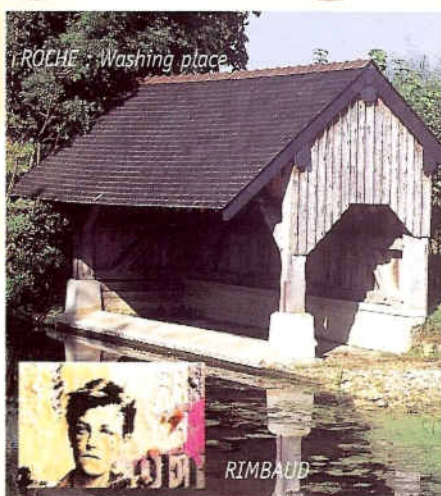


ATTIGNY :
the Charlemagne Dome

Photo : Ph. - DUPRÉ



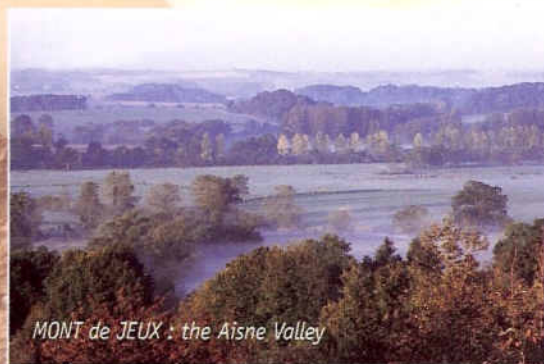
NEUVILLE DAY : dungeon



ROCHE : Washing place



RIMBAUD



MONT de JEUX : the Aisne Valley

SEE :

- Attigny** : the Charlemagne Dome
- Neuville-Day** : Dungeon & Priory
- Voncq** : viewing point looking over the Aisne Valley
- Mont de Jeux** : Viewpoint overlooking the Aisne Valley
- Chuffilly-Roche** : Washing place – Meet the poet Rimbaud – Mery Chapel
- Coulommès et Marquény** : Malval Farm where the poet Verlaine lived



Military Museums

Margut Museum

15th - 30th June

open weekends 13h30 - 17h30

1st July - 15th Sept: open 13h30 - 17h
(closed Mondays)

☎ 03 24 22 61 00

La Horgne Museum

15th May - 15th September

10am - 12am 2pm - 7pm Weekends &
public holidays

July + August : 2pm - 7pm weekdays

☎ 03 24 35 64 44

Waroux Mill Museum - Semuy

1st May - 30th Sept 10am - 7pm

☎ 03 24 71 41 09

- Novion Porcien

Museum of War & Peace

This new museum of 4,000 square meters takes the visitor back through the important events of French history between 1870 and 1945 as seen through the eyes of the people of Ardennes.

On the ground floor, 10 large displays bring to life the main episodes of the three Franco-German wars. You can see a house in Bazeilles in 1870, a German trench in 1917 and an Ardennes fortified house in 1940. The exhibition uses *son & lumière* effects and video film projectors.

On the large mezzanine level you can find numerous displays which present the changes in arms and military equipment from 1850 to 1945; each theme contains the finest items in the museum's collection.

Closed 15th - 31st Jan

Open June - Sept from 10 am to 7 pm

Open Oct - May from 10 to 12 am and from 2 to 6 pm. Closed Tuesdays.

Audio-guided visits - handicapped access

☎ 03 24 72 69 50



© Christophe Jorreau



Novion Porcien : Museum of War & Peace in Ardennes

Between the rivers Chiers et Aisne

Edited by :
l'association ARDENNES 1940
"à ceux qui ont résisté"

Address:
Mairie 08390 Stonne

Photograph : Jean-Marie Lecomte

