

Holocaust Survivors and Remembrance Project

preserving the past to protect the future ...

"Forget You Not"™: Bergen-Belsen Death Camp

Bergen Belsen was the first death camp entered by the Western allies and first-hand accounts of mass graves, piles of corpses and emaciated, diseased survivors spread quickly around the world.

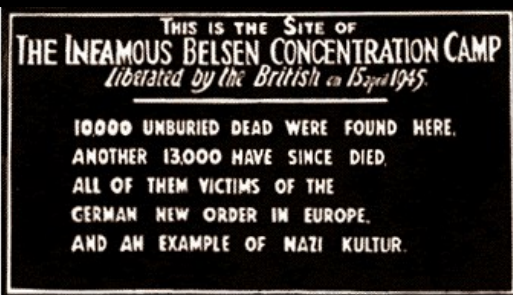


About Bergen-Belsen Camp

Bergen-Belsen began as a prison camp for captured prisoners of war. It was not like [Auschwitz](#) where numerous gas chambers killed thousands everyday. But Bergen-Belsen was no less cruel or horrifying. Most died at Bergen-Belsen from being shot, hung, starved to death, or killed by disease. This camp did not fit the standard organization of a concentration camp. It had several camps that segregated the prisoners. Camp officials even traded important prisoners, including Jews, in exchange for money from different governments. Bergen-Belsen was unique in many ways, but it was still a camp where thousands suffered and died under the harsh hand of Nazi leadership.



<footnote.com/page/94047639_bergenbelsen_concentration_camp/>





Dr. Fritz Klein, a former camp doctor who conducted medical experiments on prisoners, stands among corpses in a mass grave. Bergen-Belsen, Germany, after April 15, 1945.
[USHMM]



Survivors queuing up for rations provided by the British Army. (April 28, 1945)
United States National Archives

**From a 1995 Interview of a Survivor:
Fela Warschau Describes the Liberation by British forces at Bergen-Belsen**

ushmm.org/wlc/media_oi.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10005224&MediaId=3281

We got weaker every day because there was nothing to eat. Finally, the last day when we had nothing, I could barely drag myself. I said to my sister, "I'm going into the barrack, and I'm going to lie down and just die in there. I do not want to die and people should just step over me like others do."

They followed me. We all lie down there and just almost said goodbye to life. One of our friends --she was even younger than I was, the youngest --she was always searching, trying to find a way. So she said she has to take the last look outside and see what's going on.

When she came back she said to me, "There's something funny going out there. People are running all over the place" and it's, it's unusual. It's not what usually happen. And I told her to just lay down and die in peace. She must be hallucinating. She insisted, so my sister walked out with her. When my sister came back, I don't know with what strength she came back, grabbed me by my arm, and she says, "Get up, get up. Guess what, everybody's running, and the gates are open.

There's a man sitting, is it a tank or whatever" --we couldn't distinguish at that time one thing from the other-- "he is speaking through a loudspeaker. His words are being translated. I think we were liberated." When I got up and walked outside, my eyes couldn't comprehend. It just didn't register. It's unbelievable. I couldn't believe this was really true, so I said to my sister that she has to grab me by my arm and do something physical so I realize I am really alive and we were liberated. It was the English army that liberated us.



The Hell Descendent on Earth at Bergen-Belsen – (April 15, 1945 Photo)
kz-zuege.de/kapitel_05.htm



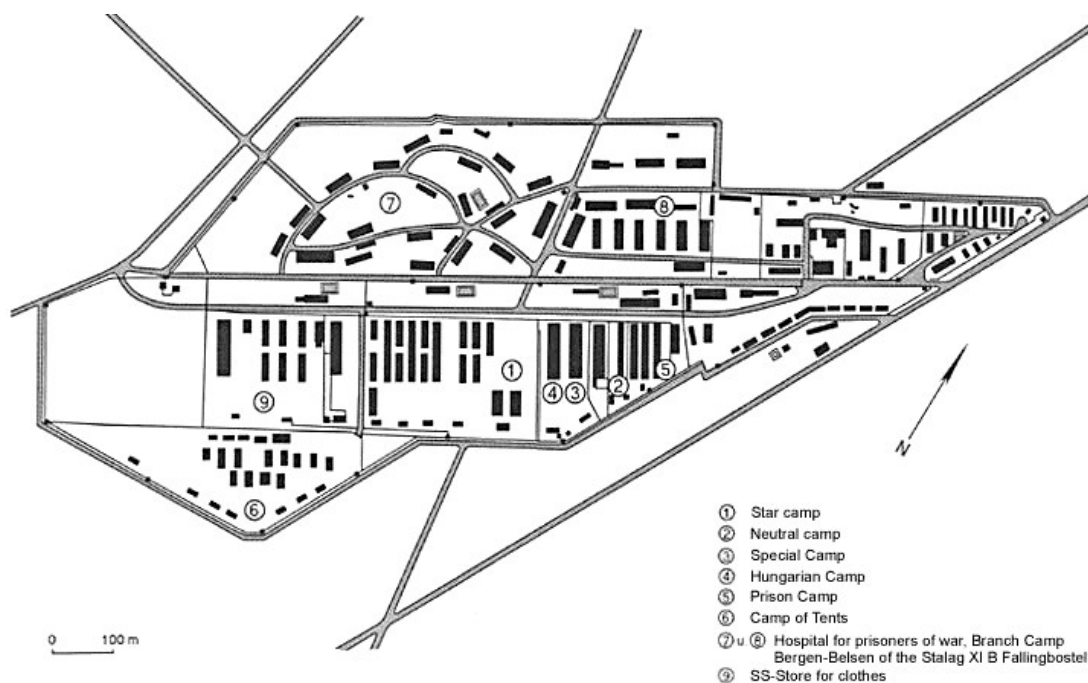
Bergen-Belsen: In Memoriam From Earth to Heaven

<sozialistische-gedenkstaetten.de/ns/Bergen-Belsen/Bergen-belsen.jpg>



Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Germany, date uncertain.
[USHMM]

KZ Bergen-Belsen Map, September 1944



Source: Bergen-Belsen Memorial, Explanatory Notes, page 53

Sign posted at Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp
by British Liberating Soldiers
that tells it all ...



Horrific scenes, as the ones above and below, greeted British troops as they entered Bergen-Belsen concentration camp on 15 April 1945.



The gruesome picture of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as discovered by British troops on April 20, 1945.

SS Women who once guarded these victims are now forced to bury them.

http://jtajchert.w.interia.pl/zdjecia_po_wyzwoleniu_obozu_berg.htm > [+ ENLARGE PICTURE](#)



Former SS guards are made to load the bodies of dead prisoners onto a truck for burial. 17-18 April 1945



HELL descend on Earth at Bergen-Belsen
<go2war2.nl/artikel/1341/4>





Crematorium at Bergen-Belsen
go2war2.nl/artikel/1341/4

The



Barely

alive at Bergen-Belsen liberation
 Photo credit: British Photo Archives R41/33
www.wcml.org.uk/webgallery/photos/pages/belsen_liberation.htm



Women survivors in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp peel potatoes on April 28, 1945.
 Photo credit: U.S. National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives
fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/gallery/10922.htm





Women survivors in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp



Women survivors suffering from Typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Photo credit: German National Archives

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/GALL31R/83815.htm>



Survivors of Bergen-Belsen walk along the main street of the camp, past a pile of victims' shoes.

Photo credit: USHMM

<http://fcit.coedu.usf.edu/holocaust/GALL31R/75113.htm>



For the living skeletons who survived the Nazi terror, the Displaced Persons Camp set up two miles (three kilometers) away offered little relief from misery. People still died at the rate of 1,000 to 1,500 a day ...

article.wn.com/view/2007/05/18/Nazi_archive_reveals_a_panorama_of_misery/

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Belsen as discovered by British Troops on April 20, 1945.
churchill-society-london.org.uk/1945JFMA.html



A British soldier speaks with a Belsen survivor.
 [Courtesy of BBC]



group of survivors in Bergen-Belsen displaced person's camp in December 1945. After liberation, the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen became the site of a displaced persons' camp, the British army medical corps helping in the physical rehabilitation of the former prisoners. –Yad Vashem Archives 3815/23



Bergen-Belsen survivors clinging to life ...
 [United States National Archives]



In the winter of 1944-1945, the situation at Bergen-Belsen deteriorates. There is little or no food and the sanitary conditions are dreadful. Many of the prisoners become ill.

Margot and Anne Frank come down with typhus. They both die just a few weeks before the camp is liberated.

Janny Brilleslijper witnesses their deaths: "First Margot had fallen out of bed onto the stone floor. She couldn't get up anymore. Anne died a day later."



Photo taken c. April 1956 by Stanley Abramson

"The fact is that all these were once clean-living and sane and certainly not the type to do harm to the Nazis. They are Jews and are dying now at the rate of three hundred a day. They must die and nothing can save them –their end is inescapable, they are too far gone now to be brought back to life. I saw their corpses lying near their hovels, for they crawl or totter out into the sunlight to die. I watched them make their last feeble journeys, and even as I watched they died."

[Peter Coombs, British soldier, May 4, 1945 letter to his wife after liberation of Bergen-Belsen.]

Editor's Note: On January 17, 2009, we received an email from Chris Coombs –the son of the late Peter Coombs, who noted:

"My father Cap't Peter Coombs of 21st Army Group, originally of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and attached to the R.A. was, I believe, one of the first British officers to help liberate Belsen. He died this year aged 96 less three days, on Jan 14th in the UK."



1945 Photo by George Rodger: "It wasn't even a matter of what I was photographing, as what had happened to me in the process. When I discovered that I could look at the horror of Belsen –4000 dead and starving lying around– and think only of a nice photographic composition, I knew something had happened to me and I had to stop. I felt I was like the people running the camp –it didn't mean a thing." George Rodger in "Dialogue with photography", Dewi Lewis Publishing.

Editor's Note: On January 31, 2009, we received an email from Guy Marlow whose grandfather, Charles Marlow, was part of the British liberating troops at Bergen-Belsen. In the received email, referring to his late grandfather (who originally was in the Kings 8th Royal Irish Hussars), Guy wrote:

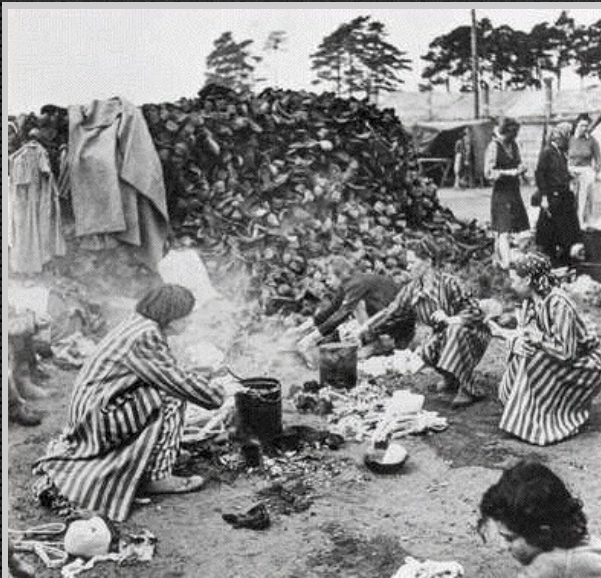
"I know that what he saw at Bergen-Belsen troubled him throughout his life as he never mentioned the war and what happened. He only opened up and spoke to me about the war one day, this was when he told me that he was at Bergen Belsen and that he had to use tractors to push bodies into pits.

My sister recently told me of a story I did not know where while at Bergen-Belsen, post liberation, a Jewish lady who was delirious came to my grandfather asking for food and/or cigarettes (we presume the cigarettes were a bartering tool) while holding onto the dead body of her child and that it was clear that her child had been dead for quite a while but that the woman still cared for it as if it was alive."



Brigadier-General H. L. Glyn Hughes,
Commanded the British unit that liberated the Belsen Camp.

Special Selected Links:



April 1945: A pile of shoes from the prisoners who perished in Bergen-Belsen.

This photo was taken in April 1945, after liberation. Originally designed as a prisoner of war and transit camp, Bergen-Belsen was to house 10,000 prisoners. From March 1944, Bergen-Belsen became a "regular concentration camp" with new prisoners arriving who were too sick to work at other camps. Some 35,000 to 40,000 inmates died of starvation, overcrowding, hard labor and disease or were killed.

– Yad Vashem Archive #1201 –

www1.yadvashem.org/this_month/april/this_month_12.html



Bergen-Belsen, near Hanover in Germany, was the first concentration camp to be

liberated by British troops, on 15 April 1945. When soldiers of the 2nd Army arrived they found the camp littered with dead and dying prisoners. Around 60,000 starving people, many suffering from typhus and dysentery, required immediate aid. Despite the best efforts of the medical services, hundreds died in the days after the liberation. In the weeks that followed, British troops buried 10,000 bodies in mass graves. An estimated 70,000 Jews, Slavs, Roma, political prisoners, gays, Jehovah's witnesses and criminals were killed at Belsen.

Memorial BERGEN-BELSEN

BERGEN - BELSEN

1 [From BBC --April 15, 1945: British Troops Liberate Bergen-Belsen](#)

o [At The Liberation of Bergen-Belsen:](#)

[The BBC in London, for 4 Days, Did Not Believe on the Atrocities Reported by its own Reporter Richard Dimbleby](#)

"... Here over an acre of ground lay dead and dying people. You could not see which was which... The living lay with their heads against the corpses and around them moved the awful, ghostly procession of emaciated, aimless people, with nothing to do and with no hope of life, unable to move out of your way, unable to look at the terrible sights around them ... Babies had been born here, tiny wizened things that could not live ... A mother, driven mad, screamed at a British sentry to give her milk for her child, and thrust the tiny mite into his arms, then ran off, crying terribly. He opened the bundle and found the baby had been dead for days.

This day at Belsen was the most horrible of my life."

BBC's Richard Dimbleby, April 15, 1945.



1 [Bergen-Belsen from Yad Vashem in the PDF format](#)

1 [Encyclopedia of the Holocaust: Bergen-Belsen](#)

1 [Bergen Belsen Camp Description](#)

1 [Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp](#)



1 [Search for Belsen survivors](#)

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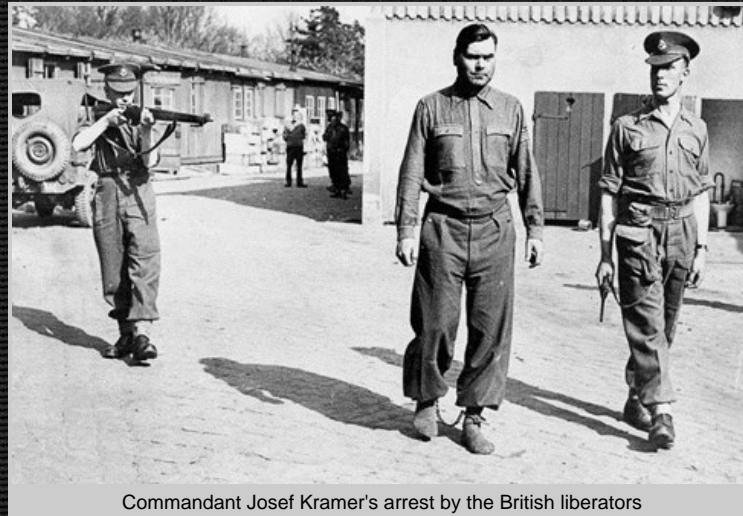
1 [Selected Photos from Bergen-Belsen at Liberation](#)

(Polish text)

- o [Bergen-Belsen Camp History](#)
- o [Bergen-Belsen Museum](#)
- o [Some Original Photos of Bergen-Belsen](#)
- o [What was it like in Bergen-Belsen?](#)
- o [The Liberation of Bergen-Belsen](#)



- 1 [Lost Images from Bergen-Belsen](#)
- 1 [Prisoners In the Barracks at Belsen, April 1945](#)
- 1 [Hanukkah In Bergen-Belsen](#)
- 1 [The Story of Belsen:](#)
- 1 [Transcript of 'The Story of Belsen'](#)
- by Captain A. Pares, Adjutant of the 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment
The Royal Artillery, c.1945 [D/DLI 7/404/10]
- 1 ['Nobody in Britain Had Any Idea'](#)
- 1 [The 11th Armoured Division \(Great Britain\)](#)



Commandant Josef Kramer's arrest by the British liberators

Belsen War Crimes Trial: An Overview

Excerpts from the Belsen Trial of Josef Kramer and 44 others

"In a hut for 400 people, there was one toilet, and the toilet was always out of order. Everybody suffered from diarrhoea. If we wanted to walk, there were also toilets in the field, but people could not walk, since they were ill."

From the Testimony of Joseph Melkman during the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

- o [THE BELSEN TRIAL](#)
BRITISH MILITARY COURT, LUNEBURG,
17TH SEPTEMBER – 17TH NOVEMBER, 1945.
(TRIAL OF JOSEF KRAMER AND 44 OTHERS)



Irma Grese (center) at the Belsen Trial

intlawgrris.blogspot.com/2007/09/women-at-nuremberg-defendants.html

Excerpts from the Belsen Trial and Biography of Irma Grese



SS officer Franz Hoessler at Belsen.
Before Belsen, Hoessler was commandant of the women's camp at Birkenau.
Source: "The Belsen Trial," edited by R. Phillips; William Hodge and Company, 1949, p. 225.



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"Forget You Not"™ Project

NOTE: If you have been distressed by this rather mild account of the Holocaust at Bergen-Belsen, we are not in the least sorry

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