

Synthesis of the Scientific and Cultural Program

1. Ouistreham Riva-Bella

The City of Ouistreham Riva-Bella is a seaside resort of 9500 inhabitants located in the north of Caen. This touristic city of the Côte de Nacre can welcome up to 45 000 inhabitants in the summertime. The city is organized around its fishing port and marina, its ferry terminal, its old medieval centre (church, Tithe Barn) and its great beach where important leisure activities are concentrated (casino, thalassotherapy centre).

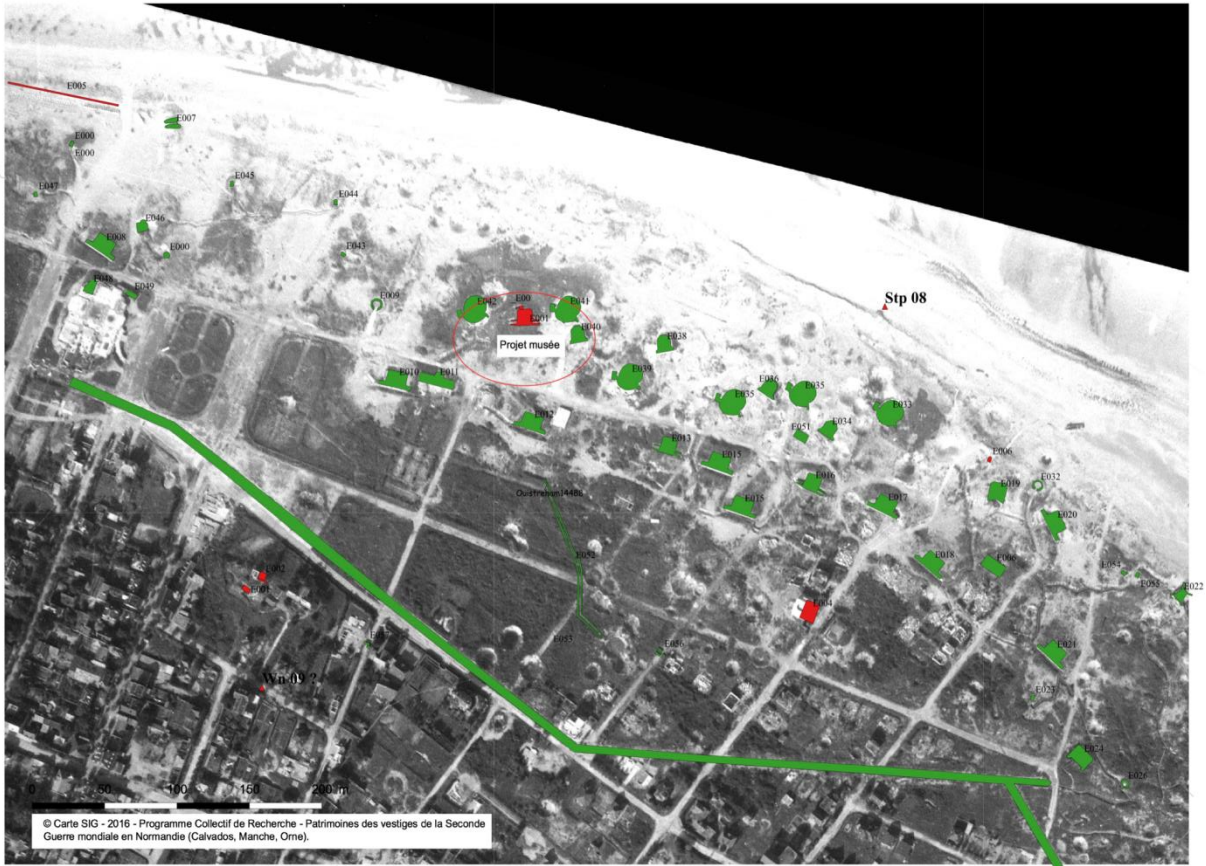
Thanks to the connection between Portsmouth and Caen-Ouistreham by Brittany Ferries, Ouistreham Riva-Bella is one of the touristic entrances into Normandy. In 2014 one million passengers travelled with the ferry, 90% of them were British.

In general 35% of the visitors in Calvados are foreigners. Most of them are English (24%), followed by Belgians (23%), Dutch (17%) and Americans (6%). Concerning the French tourists, 19% are from Normandy and 17% from Ile-de-France (Paris).

The city has two museums that welcome together 60 000 visitors every year. These museums present the D Day of the Commando Kieffer in Normandy, the liberation of the city on June 6th 1944 and the Atlantic wall.

Nowadays it's difficult for the young generations to imagine the city as it was in 1942, strongly fortified by the German occupation. Located on the east side of the British landing sector coded "Sword", the seaside resort found itself right in the middle of operation Overlord. Thus, Ouistreham Riva-Bella became geographically and historically really involved in the operations of June 6th and the battle for Caen that ended up in the middle of July 1944.

We can see on the map below all the fortifications in Ouistreham Riva-Bella in 1944. The fortifications in green are the one that are not visible anymore whereas the ones in red are still visible.



After the war, Ouistreham Riva-Bella welcomed British remembrance ceremonies. In 1984, the city set up a commemorative monument, La Flamme by Yvonne Guégan which pays tribute to the action of the men of the Commando Kieffer who liberated the city and took hold of the fortification of the previous casino of Ouistreham.



In 1984 François Mitterrand, President of the French Republic was the first to visit Ouistreham. He was later followed by Jacques Chirac, Nicolas Sarkozy and François Hollande.

It is on the beach of Ouistreham that Mr. Kader Arif, ministry of defence in charge of the veterans decided to pay tribute to the French and British soldiers who fought together on June 6th 1944. His speech recalled facts that a lot of people have forgotten today:

“The landing of Normandy is a marker of our history and of the history of the world. (...) That’s why I am proud, happy and moved to announce that it is on Sword beach, in the British sector, that the international ceremony of the 70th anniversary of the D Day will be organised. (...) In the past, other beaches were chosen. Today it is a tribute to our British friends, but also the recognition of the men of Commando Kieffer, French men among the French. Homage to Great Britain, which stood up against Germany till June 1941.”

The international ceremony of the 70th anniversary of D Day that was organised in June 2014 completed the memorial cycle. On that day, the entire world was at Sword beach, placing the city of Ouistreham Riva-Bella, in the limelight at the time of the ceremonies.

On June 6th 2014 Ouistreham welcomed 19 heads of states and governments, almost 8 000 guests, among whom 1 800 veterans, to commemorate the end of the war and the gathering of the peoples. This was symbolized that day by two enemies from yesterday that embraced : Johannes Börner, a German paratrooper and Léon Gautier, a French veteran of the n° 4 French-British Commando.



To perpetuate the message of these two historical days, Romain Bail, Mayor of Ouistreham Riva-Bella, surrounded by several teams felt the necessity to set up a museum dedicated to the action of the British troops in Normandy and the relationships between France and the United-Kingdom from 1945 until today.

2. Committees

To run this project, three committees have been created: a scientific committee, a technical committee and a management committee. Composed of personalities and specialists, these committees permit us to produce all the necessary documents to realize the future museum. The first objective them is to elaborate the Cultural and Scientific Program.

The management committee is composed of town and region councilors, local and regional actors in the field of tourism, and future partners.

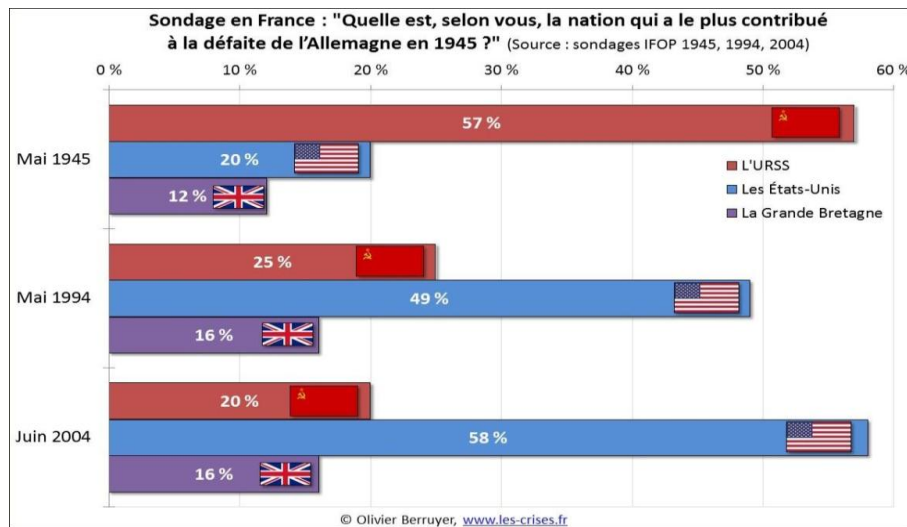
The scientific committee is composed of historians, university professors and representatives of the French National Education, local and regional actors in the field of tourism and people with a passion for history.

The technical committee is composed of architects and developers of innovative technologies for museography and museum educational methods.

3. Reminder of what exists

Plenty of museums are to be found along the Normandy coast but none of them presents the determining role of the British troops on D.Day and during the battle of Normandy in a general and synthetic way. Most structures are dedicated to the landing and the actions of the American troops in Normandy. Some of them are devoted to the British troops, like the Battery of Merville, the Pegasus Memorial, the museum of the N°4 Commando in Ouistreham, the museum of the Atlantic Wall in the “Grand Bunker” in Ouistreham, the America Gold Beach museum, the museum of Arromanches and, finally, the museum of the battle of Normandy in Bayeux. All these thematic museums only evoke a part of the action of the British troops at the time of D.Day and during the battle of Normandy. Today, the

collective memory has generally forgotten or minimized the resistance of the British people to Nazism and the fights led by the United-Kingdom against the Reich forces.



The geographical proximity of the museum with Great Britain gives a logical reason to build the museum in Ouistreham Riva-Bella.

To reestablish the action of the British troops, Ouistreham Riva-Bella decided to create a new museum that will explain the history of the Franco-British relationships during the war but not only. This structure will be a place for culture and instruction and will intend to trace the history of the Franco-British relationships from 1939 until today:

- One third for the period from 1939 to 1944,
- One third for the Landing and the Battle of Normandy,
- One third for the Franco-British relationships from 1945 until today.

4. Principles of the museum

The future Franco-British Museum will not be a Museum built around a collection but around an innovative and unprecedented speech on the history of the Franco-British relationships since 1939, with an important focus on "World War II, the Landing and the Battle of Normandy", but not just that. The Museum will also evoke the relationships between France and the United Kingdom from 1945 until today, and the role played by the Franco-British 'couple' in the building of Europe. The future structure will be an interpretive centre, a tool for understanding aimed at all audiences.

It will be thought and designed as a complement to existing museums in order to properly conceptualize the action of the British troops in the area during World War II. Visitors will be invited to visit the other historic sites dedicated to the D-Day and with more specific themes.

5. Location of the museum

This site (red square on the map below) corresponds to one of the most dynamic poles of Ouistreham Riva-Bella, around the casino, the Thalassotherapy centre, the end of the main shopping street, "rue de la Mer", the beach, the Tourist Office, between two major points of the coast: the Brittany Ferries Terminal and the Memorial of "La Flamme", main marker of the French memory of the Landing on Sword. It is also between the Museum of the 4th Commando and the large Bunker (yellow square).



The future Museum will have take into account and integrate a German bunker on the selected location. It is actually a former ammunition bunker in a very good shape that can be visited or even used in the scenography of the museum. The project will also fit into a redevelopment project of the promenade on the beach of Ouistreham Riva-Bella. On the one hand, this will allow to create a strong link between the ferry terminal, the Museum and the flame (La Flamme), and on the other hand it will permit to connect the beach, the Museum and the city.



6. The site visit program

The members of the scientific committee have met several times since September 2015 in order to define the framework of the future permanent circuit for the visit of the Franco-British Museum.

In order to offer a complete space, the Museum could include a permanent exhibition hall, a temporary exhibition space, an educational space suitable for schoolchildren, a meeting room, an auditorium, a documentary and resource centre, a reserve room dedicated to the management of the collections.

The Museum will be animated by a policy of dynamic educational activities to set up a rich cultural program that will include the themes of the Museum, to complement the approach of the program of the visit of the site.

The scenographic circuit:

- First space : The relationships between France and England between 1939 and 1940
- Second space : Ouistreham Riva-Bella during the Occupation until the eve of the landing
- Third space : the preparations for D-day
- Fourth space : the Landing of the British and the French
- Fifth space : the Normandy campaign
- Sixth space : assessment, reconstruction, memory and commemorations
- Seventh space : The Franco-British relationships since 1945.