

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

H M Prison Dartmoor: French Prisoner of War Cemetery

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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Name:	H M Prison Dartmoor: French Prisoner of War Cemetery
County:	Devon
District:	West Devon (District Authority)
Parish:	Dartmoor Forest
National park:	DARTMOOR
label.localisation:	Latitude: 50.550927 Longitude: -3.9952298 National Grid Reference: SX5874674253 <a href="#">Map: Download a full scale map (PDF)</a>
label.overview:	Heritage Category: Park and Garden Grade: II List Entry Number: 1427528 Date first listed: 18-Apr-2016 Location Description: HMP Dartmoor, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 6RR

## Historique de la conservation

During the Napoleonic Wars of 1809-1816 and the Anglo-American War of 1812-16, 271 American and around 1200 French soldiers died at Dartmoor Prison where they were held as prisoners of war. They were buried in unmarked graves in a field immediately west of the prison outside the prison walls. In the early 1860s, in response to reports that during ploughing of the field human remains regularly came to the surface, the Governor of Dartmoor Prison decided to create two burial grounds east of the prison, outside the prison walls, one for the French and one for American prisoners of war. The human remains were exhumed, divided into two parts and then reburied. The two burial grounds were enclosed by a stone wall and the convicts of Dartmoor Prison (by then a civic prison) made a commemorative obelisk for each burial ground. In 2002 the obelisks to both cemeteries were restored by Dartmoor Prison and a cast iron entrance gate was added to the south side, including seats and a flagpole. On 24 May 2009, on the occasion of the bicentenary of the first French prisoners of war transferring from the Plymouth hulks to Dartmoor Prison, a ceremony was held at the French Cemetery attended by descendents of the prisoners of war and French dignitaries.

## Details

A burial ground laid out in 1866-8 to commemorate the French prisoners of war who died at Dartmoor Prison during the Napoleonic Wars of 1809-1816.

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** The French Prisoner of War Cemetery, a rectangular shaped site of c 0.3ha, is located immediately north of Dartmoor Prison outside the prison wall. It is enclosed by a local granite stone retaining wall, c 1m in height. The burial ground is surrounded by farmland with the rugged moorland stretching out beyond

it to its north and east. Immediately to its east lies the American Prisoner of War Cemetery also created in 1865 and to a matching design.

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The burial ground is approached from either the east or the west via a track that runs along the outside of Dartmoor Prison's perimeter wall. It can be entered from the south either via small steps built into the cemetery wall, or via an opening further along, to its right. The latter has since 2002 decorative cast-iron spear-headed gates presented by Dartmoor Prison giving access to a gravel path that leads to a commemorative obelisk to the centre of the burial ground.

**GARDENS** The uneven ground of the cemetery is laid to lawn with a perimeter walk. The lawn rises to a bank built up against the dry stone wall enclosing the burial ground. The earth banks are planted with a row of Oak trees. The focal point of the burial ground is a granite obelisk standing at its centre. It commemorates the French Prisoners of War who died at Dartmoor prison between 1809 and 1816. It is set on a circular stepped base, introduced in c2002. Circa 2 or 3m north-east of the obelisk stands a flag pole, also introduced at that time. Made by convicts of Dartmoor prison in 1865, the obelisk formerly stood on a granite stone rubble base forming a rockery planted with ferns, as shown on a photograph of c1900.

## Summary

A burial ground laid out in 1866-8 to commemorate the French Prisoners of War who died at Dartmoor Prison during the Napoleonic Wars of 1809-1816.

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.

## Reasons for Designation

The French Prisoner of War Cemetery, H M Prison Dartmoor, a landscaped burial ground created in 1866-8 to commemorate the French PoWs who lost their lives at Dartmoor Prison during the Napoleonic Wars of 1806- 16, is included on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest at Grade II for the following principal reasons: \* Date: a good and relatively early example of a landscaped burial ground associated with Dartmoor Prison, reflecting changing attitudes to respecting the dead and military commemoration from the 1850s onwards. \* Rarity: it is a rare, surviving example of a landscape of remembrance associated with the Napoleonic Wars; \* Historic associations: it is an important and poignant reminder of the Napoleonic Wars, a significant conflict that changed Europe forever and as such continues to be a focal point for reflection and commemoration; \* Quality of its monument: the obelisk, forming the focal point of the design, reflects, despite its modest design, the importance of the burial ground as a landscape of remembrance. The fact it was made by inmates of Dartmoor Prison, adds to its interest and poignancy; \* Group value: the burial ground forms an important group with the adjacent American Prisoner of War Cemetery laid out and planted together in 1866-8 as a matching pair, and with Dartmoor Prison.

## Bibliographie

### Books and journals

James, Trevor, *Prisoners of War at Dartmoor: American and French Soldiers and Sailors in an English Prison during the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812*, (2013)

Joy, Ron, *Dartmoor Prison, a complete illustrated history* (2 volumes), (2002), vol 2, p 43

### Other

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Ordnance Survey map 1:2500 published in 1884