

Prenzlauerberg

Prenzlauer Berg is characterized by [Wilhelmine](#) buildings, that were erected at the turn of the 20th century (1889 to 1905). Over 80% of all housing in this area was constructed before 1948, with the oldest building still standing being from 1848 at 77 Kastanienallee.

A small lesson in history

The area of today's city district "Prenzlauer Berg" used to be known as the "Feldmark". In 1920 it officially became part of the city of Berlin, then called administrative district 4 "Prenzlauer Tor". The new borough added about 310,000 inhabitants to Berlin's population. In 1921 the name of the district was changed to "Prenzlauer Berg". It has an area of approximately 10.9 square kilometres and a population of about 147,710 inhabitants (as of 31 Aug 1994). 192 streets and squares are part of the district or borough.

The structure of the road network in Prenzlauer Berg is a result of the planning work by James Hobrecht (1825-1902), the government's master builder. He planned a network of streets that formed a rectangular grid across the north and north east of the city. His construction plans were published in 1862. The intended streets and squares were labelled with numbers and letters and the area of today's borough was divided in subareas XI, XII and XIII. All streets and squares were named properly in the process of construction. Soon new residential areas and companies were built to provide supplies for the city.

Oderberger Straße

Thus the French quarter was developed after the German-French War in 1870/1871. It is situated between Schönhauser Allee and Prenzlauer Allee and can be recognised by its streets which have been named after places in France such as Strasbourg, Metz, Mülhausen and Kolmar. Some streets were named to honour Prussian generals such as Fransecky and Tresckow, however, these streets are now Sredzkistraße and Knaakstraße.

Today's Danziger Straße was named in 1874 but had already been in existence as an important transport road since 1822. North of the Danziger Straße streets were preferably named after famous or historic personalities. Among the people who were honoured by having a street named after them were the archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, the physiologist Hermann Helmholtz, the jurist Heinrich von Gneist, the inventor of lithography Aloys Senefelder as well as the long-serving mayor Hermann Duncker.

Some of the streets, which had been constructed after the turn of the century near Bornholmer Straße, later formed the so-called Nordic Quarters. Here Finnländische Straße, Gotlandstraße and Malmöer Straße can be found but also streets which honour the Danish author and poet Anderson, the author Björnson and the playwright Ibsen, both Norwegian.

Near Greifswalder Street and south of the city train railway the Prussian Quarters started to grow around 1911. The streets there have been named after places in former East Prussia. However,

names such as Bartenstein, Goldap, Gumbinnen or Rastenburg were replaced in 1974. These streets are now without exception named after opponents of National Socialism, who lost their lives between 1933 and 1945. The same applies to the Western Prussian Quarter, which is situated between the Friedrichshain and the city train railway. Here streets were renamed in 1904/06. In 1974 about 18 streets were renamed. After the first World War the streets north east of the city train station Landsberger Allee mainly received names from flora and fauna, such as lilies and snowdrops.

In 1931 many newly built streets between Ostseestraße and city train line received names of union leaders such as Robert Dißmann, Martin Segitz, Adam Drunsel. However, these names disappeared again in 1933 when the streets were named after battlefields of the first World War, such as Langemarck and Flandern. All together these streets received three different names within two decades because in 1948 their names were changed again to honour opponents of the National Socialism such as Otto Schieritz, Arthur Sodtke and Erich Küsel. In comparison to other quarters of the city only very few streets in Prenzlauer Berg have received new names or were newly built after 1945. 16 streets and squares were renamed between 1933 and 1945. After that until 1990 47 streets and squares received a new name.

In 1992 the Leninallee officially went back to its original name, Landsberger Allee. In 1993, three streets received new names: Fritz-Dahlem-Straße is now Ella-Kay-Straße, Wilhelm-Florian-Straße became Lilli-Hennoch-Straße and Werneucher Straße now is Margarete-Sommer-Straße. Two streets were given back their old historical names: Behmstraße and Schivelbeiner Straße. Part of a street that had not been named before is now Diesterwegstraße. After having been without a name for twenty years, the Arnswalder Platz officially returned to this, its historical name. Finally, Wilhelm-Pieck-Straße was renamed in Torstraße in 1994.

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Zeiss-Großplanetarium

Prenzlauer Allee 80, 10405 Berlin

Renovation and modernization work at the Zeiss Großplanetarium began in April 2014 and was finished August 25, 2016.

In addition to a new, digital media technology and various structural projects, a new conceptual orientation is also a part of the overall modernization plan. After the reopening, the Zeiss Großplanetarium is one of the most modern scientific theatres in Europe.

Gethsemane Church

The protestant church Gethsemanekirche has become famous mostly because of the year 1989, Germany's 'Year of Change'. On November 5th, 1989, the church was venue to the State Orchestra's rendition of Beethoven's 3rd symphony, when musical director Rolf Reuter demanded at the top of his voice "The Wall must go!" to tumultuous applause, which led to an impromptu demonstration along Schönhauser Allee.

The church, located in the Helmholtzkiez area of the Prenzlauer Berg district, was built between 1891 and 1893 by architect August Orth. Just like the Church of Zion (Zionskirche), Gethsemane is an interesting mix of rotunda and longitudinal building styles: its exterior gives the impression of a late gothic hall church with a transept, but the crossing is laid out as a large octagon with a stellar vault across large parts of the interior, creating a centralising visual effect.

Following the resignation of the old GDR regime in March of 1990, this church hosted a service for the first and only democratically elected People's Assembly (Volkskammer) of the GDR.

The Return of the Cows

There aren't many reasons to visit quiet Dietrich-Bonhoeffer Strasse, which lies on the bleeding edge of gentrified Prenzlauerberg's encroachment into (formerly) gritty Friedrichshain. But Sergej Dott's whimsical public art installation, "Die Rückkehr der Kühe" ("The Return of the Cows") just might make it worth the trip.

Halfway down the block, if you peer into the empty lot and look up, you'll see a green field full of larger-than-life cows "walking" up and down the side of a pre-war Berlin apartment house. Dott specializes in public installations, including the cow installations he calls "Kuhunst." Savvy Germanophiles will recognize the pun on the German words for art ("Kunst") and cow ("Kuh"). Another can be found just west of The Return of the Cows, at Kollwitzstraße 18 in Prenzlauerberg.

Kulturbrauerei

<http://www.kulturbrauerei.de/gelaende/geschichte/>

Prater Garden (oldest beer garden in Berlin)

<http://www.pratergarten.de/e/chronik.html>

Beginnings often remain vague. A certain Porath is said to have started serving beer at Kastanienallee 7 in 1837. But documents show that the Kalbo family purchased the establishment in 1852 and started developing it. This is when it evolved from a beer garden and outdoor café into a place of all-round enjoyment and leisure.

Initially located on the sandy edge of Berlin, the city soon swallowed the »café chantant«. Soubrettes could be seen on stage, and Mr. Kalbo started calling himself a »cafétier«. Prater quickly developed.

Prater survived the major bombing raids virtually untouched. The Soviet military administration ordered the opening of a cultural establishment in Prater, and the first hungry dancers and clowns appeared as early as the summer of 1945.

Konnopkes Imbiss (The Berlin Currywurst Place)

Max Konnopke was 29 years old when he came from Cottbus to Berlin and decided to become a Wurstmaxe.

No sooner said than done. He married his beloved Charlotte and from 4th October 1930 they both sold a range of sausages and frankfurter in Prenzlauer Berg from 7 pm to 5 am seven days a week. Max stood on the busy corner of Schönhauser Allee / Danziger Straße; Charlotte served hungry customers at the corner of Schönhauser Allee / Stargarder Straße. A folding table, umbrella and sausage pot. Nothing more was needed.

OUR STORY: 1930 IT ALL BEGAN WITH WURSTMAXE ...
1947: FROM MOBILE SAUSAGE POT TO FIXED LOCATION

After release from a P.O.W. camp, Max Konnopke managed to get together what was needed to build two wooden booths. One was on the corner of Schönhauser Allee / Dimitroffstraße (today Danziger Strasse), the other on Antonplatz in Weissensee. Both he replaced shortly afterwards with a sausage cart. They needed to be rolled away at night because of regulations.

Their daughter Waltraud trained in a bakery, son Günter as a butcher. The daughter later joined the parental business. Her husband Kurt Ziervogel was also soon part of the business. From 1958 they sold sausages together at the weekly markets in Prenzlauer Berg and helped out at the two stalls. They are also sold their products at the Berlin Christmas market. Their potato fritters were a hit there!

Max Konnopke, the man that could do everything, wanted to do it all himself and have an eye on things, fell ill. That's why he passed on his two widely-known stalls to his daughter and son. The second generation took over; Günter in Weissensee, Waltraud chose Prenzlauer Berg.

Each weekday, just after four in the morning, she entered her realm. Before long she was on first name basis with most customers, was called Wally or Traudchen and was a kind of neighborhood mother. Business boomed. Except on weekends; then it was closed.

1983 Waltraud Ziervogel had a new kiosk built in the style of the time: from yellowish shiny metal. It was similar to the numerous Intershops in the GDR. Max Konnopke knew his business was in good hands when he died in 1986.

1987 Waltraud expanded: an extension was built onto the kiosk, from where she then sold filled rolls. Those who wanted to sit down to eat could do so in the garden built next to the kiosk the same year.

Konnopke's had become an attraction, a magnet for Berlin and its guests. Son Günter started work in 1960 with a butcher in Wedding, West Berlin. And what did he discover there? The Currywurst! They weren't available in East Berlin but that was about to change...

With their butcher, the Konnopkes quickly devised a recipe that created a skinless Currywurst from their sausages with skin. The recipe for the sauce was invented in the home kitchen. The whole family was involved and has kept the secret in the family to this day.

The first Currywurst was in East Berlin: At Konnopke 's! Fried In lard and served whole on a plate. On top the delicious sauce that mother Charlotte still mixed by hand at home. With a kiosk that Max Konnopke designed himself, the carts were replaced the same year in the Schönhauser Allee in Prenzlauer Berg and in the Berlin Allee / corner Mahlerstraße in Weissensee. The kiosk had electricity and water connected, operated with propane gas, and was permanent. There was even a freezer. It was glazed all around.

At half past four in the morning, the light behind the windows already lured the revelers from Prenzlauer Berg, craftsmen from the surrounding industries and shift workers to the kiosk in the "Boulevard of the North". Soon they were standing in long queues for a Currywurst. Things were happening. Word got around fast.

1960 THE FIRST CURRYWURST IN EAST BERLIN

Brotfabrik

Not surprisingly, in 1890 bread was baked in the Brotfabrik with its remarkable yellow bricks. But the new owner in 1952 was not that into communist bread and fled to West-Berlin, like many other East-Germans. After that no more sweet rolls or rye breads were baked here. In 1986 the Brotfabrik it became a youth club for the [art](#) school of the Berlin quarter Weissensee. Brotfabrik after the Wende.

After the [Wende](#) the former factory got a new focus. The Brotfabrik became a house of culture. You can watch art films and documentaries in the small cinema. Or you may go to the theatre. It's also possible to [dance](#) or visit an exposition to see pictures of East Berlin, before the Wende. There are also workshops in the former factory and its hosts small concerts full of improvisation. If you are not that into culture, only go to the Kneipe that's also worth a visit and drink a beer with the locals. www.brotfabrikberlin.de

Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg

Looking at Stadtbad [Prenzlauer Berg](#) in the Oderbergerstrasse it's hard to imagine how important it was for the people of Prenzlauer Berg. But a hundred years ago life without a shower or a bath was perfectly normal. Now most people splash with water in their bathroom everyday. But in Berlin this wasn't common.

Angel at Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg at Berlin's Oderbergerstrasse

No bathroom in Prenzlauer Berg

Even in 1990 some people in [Prenzlauer Berg](#) didn't have a toilet. They had to stumble down the stairs to use the common room. To avoid being stinky and smelly Berliners went to public baths, like the fairytale Stadtbad in the Oderbergerstrasse.

Just after the Berlin Wall fell Russian writer Wladimir Kaminer came to live in Berlin. He ended up in the beaten up workers paradise Prenzlauer Berg. He was really happy, until he realized he didn't have a toilet. In summer and in wintertime he had to run down the stairs to use the common toilet. Nowadays every Berliner has a toilet, but before 1990 this was not so common. If you didn't want to stink too badly, Berliners went for a bath at the many Stadtbad's Berlin has to offer. Every quarter had it's own Stadtbad, like Wedding and [Mitte](#). But one of the most beautiful ones is Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg at the Oderbergerstrasse.

Big bellied Neptune, the god of the seas, welcomes you at the entrance. Fish, tortoises, crabs and octopuses swim along the façade of Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg. German sculptor Otto Lessing (known for his sculptures in Leipzig and Stadtbad Kreuzberg) made the stunning sea creatures. In 1902 the smelly Berliners in Prenzlauer Berg could clean themselves for the first time in Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse. Ludwig Hoffmann and his workmen had been busy building the neo-renaissance swimming pool since 1899. With it's many windows full of soft lights and arches it looked like a swim church. People could clean themselves under the showers or in the baths.

But in the years after the Second World War visitors were only allowed to use the showers if they brought briquettes to heat up the oven at the Stadtbad. Many Prenzelzwerger (kids from Prenzlauer Berg) learned how to swim in Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse. And their children too. For decades the Stadtbad was very popular in Prenzlauer Berg. Therefore it was tragic when the magical swim church with its fairytale sea creatures and small angels closed down.

Cracks in the pool at Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg

What happened? Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse got a new chimney. But a stupid mistake was made. The chimney was too heavy and cracks were formed in the swimming pool. The concrete and tiles could no longer contain the water because of the numerous cracks. There was no money left to remove the chimney and renovate Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse. In 1986 the swim fun was over. After the fall of the Berlin Wall the state of Stadtbad deteriorated. The angels got covered with moss, the cracks widened and the windows broke. The city of Berlin looked for a suitable investor since they didn't have the money to renovate it. The people of Prenzlauer Berg were afraid that a fancy investor would turn the building into something that didn't benefit Prenzlauer Berg.

They missed swimming at the Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse and preferred to plunge in the water again.

Silvester at Stadtbad Prenzlauer Berg

In the mean time the Stadtbad was used for exhibitions, theatre plays and Silvesterparties (NYE party). Untill Berliner Barbara Jaeschke finally bought the place in 2011.

She runs a language course in the nearby Kastanienallee and always wanted to expand. Jaeschke turns the swimming pool into a hotel for her course members and language students.

But the most important thing is of course the swimming pool. In 2015 her guests, but also prenzeltzwerger, Berliners and tourists are able to swim here again. Finally people are allowed to swim in the most beautiful swimming pool of Berlin.

At the end of 2012 her workers had already collected 75 containers of rubble and dirt and removed the heavy chimney. They even found an old safe. Eagerly they opened it. It didn't contain a treasure, but old shampoo wrappings.

The swimming pool is being renovated and the old tiles are used in the seminar rooms. The frog motives will remain, just as the three terraces and big window at the swimming pool. The wooden doors of the old Stadtbad will be reused for the 80 guest rooms.

In 2015 the doors of Stadtbad Oderbergerstrasse will open again and you will be able to swim here five days a week for regular Berlin swimming pool prizes.

Until then the location can apparently be booked for conferences, private party's, concerts and photo shootings.

Schönhauser Allee Cemetery

<http://www.jg-berlin.org/en/judaism/cemeteries/schoenhauser-allee.html>

Two arterial roads fork from Senefelderplatz, creating a triangular plot of unused land quite typical of the urban planning found in the Prenzlauer Berg district. This site, with its magical atmosphere, is bisected by a lonely road – a public thoroughfare, according to the land register – that runs along the wall of the Jewish “Place of Eternal Rest” established in 1827, hidden between the garden-sheds and Wilhelminian tenements of Kollwitzstrasse. On Kollwitzplatz Square, two stars of David adorn the tall portico that opens onto to this so-called Jew's Path (“Judengang”). This path was also commonly known as the “Way of Communication”. The 7.5-metre-wide alleyway, which is 400 meters long and follows the length of the cemetery wall, was at one time also flanked by another wall, which no longer exists. This mysterious Totenpfad (path of the dead) dates back to 1827, the very year the cemetery was opened. It was intended as an easterly access into the burial ground. Legend has it that the Prussian king ordered its construction so he could bypass the miserable-looking Jewish mourners from Eastern Europe who populated the Scheunenviertel (stable district, a poor quarter), an area through which he had to pass on his way from the city castle to the Niederschöhausen Palace, in the Pankow district. After all, magnificent funeral corteges such as those for Giacomo Meyerbeer in May 1864 were rarities. It was far more typical to see throngs of poor souls from Schendelgasse, Hirtenstrasse, Dragonerstrasse, and Grenadierstrasse following the funeral processions that started at the Schönhauser Tor and ended at the cemetery – a pitiful sight, to be sure.

In the 1840s, local tenants began to parcel out sections of the alleyway into gardens; they used flowers, lanterns and discarded furniture to turn it into a leisure-time paradise where they would spend Berlin's long summer evenings. Other sections of the alley remained unused, and eventually nature took its course. Recently, Berlin authorities restored the alley and turned into a pedestrian zone, open to the public – its intended purpose. However the gate that used to be opened for funeral processions remains closed. Burials no longer take place at this “House of Life”, a name that Jews give their cemeteries: places where the deceased can find eternal rest. A Jewish cemetery may not be removed, as it is forbidden to disturb the peace of the dead. Desecration of a gravesite is thus considered especially reprehensible.

The so-called magical triangle between Schönhauser Allee, Kollwitzstrasse and Knaackstrasse is shrouded in ivy and populated by maple, linden and chestnut trees, which shade the more than 25,000 graves in summer and leave it open to the sun in winter. This is a vivid history book of Jewish life and of Berlin culture, illustrated by the fine and priceless tombs erected there. However, it is also a hilly triangle where the graves of many of the Scheunenviertel's unnamed residents also lie hidden under tangled ivy. The cemetery was erected on the grounds of an old brewery and dairy farm. The remains of several cisterns can still be seen on the property. Reportedly, during the final weeks of World War II, German soldiers deserting the Wehrmacht hid in one of these cisterns, only to be discovered by the Gestapo and executed – strung up and hung on the trees of the cemetery. A memorial plaque recalls this episode: “They wanted no more killing; and that meant their death” (“Den Tod anderer nicht zu wollen, das war ihr Tod”). The last two people buried here were Vera Frankenberg, a young girl killed on the cemetery grounds during a grenade attack in 1945; and Martha Liebermann, wife of the painter Max Liebermann. She chose suicide rather than face impending deportation in 1943. Only in 1960 were her remains transferred from the Weissensee cemetery and laid to rest next to the grave of her husband, who had died in 1935.

In 1827, after the closure of Berlin's first and oldest Jewish cemetery, on Grosse Hamburger Strasse, the Jewish community purchased the property on what was then Pankower Chaussee Avenue. The community converted the grounds and existing buildings into a second cemetery. To the left of its main entrance stood the memorial chapel as well as other buildings. Today, a sandstone block monument recalls the buildings that had been destroyed. Designed by Ferdinand Friedrich, the memorial was erected in 1961. Its inscription reads: “You stand here silently, but when you turn to leave, do not remain silent” (“Hier stehst du schweigend, doch wenn du Dich wendest, schweige nicht!”).

In 2005, the entrance to the cemetery was restructured and a lapidarium constructed to house those gravestones that the Nazis had once tried to destroy.

Although it is uncommon and even unwanted for likenesses to be placed on Jewish graves, three stones with portraits of the deceased can be found at the cemetery: Sophie Loewe's portrait is attached to her pyramid shaped tomb. She died in 1876. The gravestone of Paul Model, who died in an accident in 1895, as well as the tomb of restaurateur Berthold Kempinski (namesake of the deluxe chain of hotels), who died in 1910, also bear portraits.

The list of prominent scientists, entrepreneurs, writers, academics and artists laid to rest in the cemetery is long.

Water Tower

The **Wasserturm Prenzlauer Berg** is [Berlin](#)'s oldest water tower, completed in 1877 and in use until 1952. The structure was designed by Henry Gill and built by the English Waterworks Company. It is situated between Knaackstraße and Belforter Straße in Kollwitzkiez, in the [Prenzlauer Berg](#) locality of Berlin (part of [Pankow](#) district) and worked on the principle of using piped water to supply the rapidly growing population of workers.

Overview

Below the storage tank were the homes of the machinery operators who worked in the tower; these apartments - a landmark of Prenzlauer Berg - are still inhabited and in much demand. As a landmark, the tower was a part of two district coat of arms from 1920 to 1987 and 1987 to 1992. An adjacent machine hall was the first [concentration camp](#) in Nazi Germany in the first half of 1933. The building was demolished in 1935.

It is still affectionately called "Dicker Hermann" (Fat Hermann) by many Berliners. The area around the water tower has been a public park since 1915.

Rykestraße Synagogue

The Rykestraße synagogue is located in the lively Kollwitz neighbourhood in the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg. It was opened for the first time in 1904 by community master builder Johann Hoeniger. At that time it also provided education for Jewish children and youths: there was a Jewish community college run by the Jewish School Association in the front of the synagogue, as well as a religious school run by the Jewish congregation with about 500 pupils.

After the Nazi seized power in 1933, the main concern of the Jewish School Association was preparing pupils for emigrating to Palestine to protect them from the fascist regime. During the Night of the Broken Glass in 1938, the synagogue was largely spared from the destruction. Nonetheless, the local community was only allowed to continue holding their religious services there until 1938. From then until the end of the war, the Wehrmacht took over the building and used it as a warehouse and stable (no evidence to support the stable claim).

During the post-war reconstruction in Berlin, the architects Ruth Golan and Kay Zareh also began restoring the only surviving synagogue in the eastern part of the city in collaboration with the Berlin curator of monuments. After the reunification, the Rykestraße synagogue was finally consecrated with Torah scrolls and reopened in 2007. Now you can reach the brick building, which is shaped like a Neo-Romantic basilica, by passing through two gateways. The wedding hall, which contains valuable ner tamid lamps from Yemen, is still used as a synagogue during the week. Today, the Rykestraße synagogue has 2000 seats, making it the biggest synagogue in Europe.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year begins in the evening of Sunday, October 2 and ends in the evening of Tuesday, October 4 in 2016.

Visiting the synagogue

Public tours through the Rykestrasse Synagogue are available on Thursdays between 14:00 and 18:00 and Sundays between 11:00 and 16:00. Tours are offered in German; **an English tour starts at 16:00 on Thursdays**. Entry is permitted until 17:30 pm and no entry is permitted at any other time.

Services are held on Friday nights and Saturday mornings.

Recommended because of its history, architecture and size. It was inaugurated in 1904 as a traditional synagogue, the congregation rejected the idea to use an organ. Plundered during *Kristallnacht* in 1938, it wasn't set on fire due to the adjacent houses. Hence, it was the first synagogue to be used in Berlin after the war and, after the ultimate destruction of many other synagogues, it became the largest in Germany with 2000 seats. It was renovated in 1953 and remained, until the reunification of Germany, the only dedicated synagogue building in East-Berlin. There were renovations made from 2005 to 2007 and it now holds 1200 seats, still being the largest, and probably prettiest synagogue in Germany. However, quite often they hardly get a minyan, so almost all seats remain empty

SENEFELDERPLATZ



Marble statue (Rudolf Pohle, 1892) of Alois Senefelder located at Senefelderplatz, Berlin. The statue honors Senefelder's invention of lithography. Senefelder's name is written in mirror-reversed lettering, which is used in lithography. One of the two children ([putti](#)) is looking at the lettering using a hand mirror, which shows the lettering unreversed.

Kollwitzplatz

<http://www.kaethe-kollwitz.de/en/> - the museum is located on the opposite side of Berlin from the platz

[Kathe Kollwitz, German \(1867 - 1945\)](#)



Kathe Kollwitz is regarded as one of the most important German artists of the twentieth century, and as a remarkable woman who created timeless art works against the backdrop of a life of great sorrow, hardship and heartache.

Kathe was born in 1867 in Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad in Russia). She studied art in Berlin and began producing etchings in 1880. In 1881 she married Dr Karl Kollwitz and they settled in a working class area of north Berlin. In 1896 her second son, Peter, was born. From 1898 to 1903 Kathe taught at the Berlin School of Women Artists, and in 1910 began to create sculpture.

In 1914 her son Peter was killed in Flanders. The loss of Peter contributed to her socialist and pacifist political sympathies. In 1919 she worked on a commemorative woodcut dedicated to Karl Liebknecht, the revolutionary socialist murdered in 1919. Kathe believed that art should reflect the social conditions of the time and during the 1920s she produced a series of works reflecting her concern with the themes of war, poverty, working class life and the lives of ordinary women.

The war opened in 1914 as a conflict which almost everyone believed would last for a few months. But the slaughter of Peter Kollwitz and the armies of 1914 did not result in a decisive victory. Instead, by the end of that year stalemate had set in: the Great War was born, a war which was to last fully 1,500 days.

At the Armistice of 11 November 1918, the German Army was not far from Vladslo. It was still in occupation of large parts of Belgium. But it had been defeated. The Allies had won the war, at an unimaginable cost. In all combatant armies, over 9 million men had died in uniform; perhaps twice that number had been wounded. And an even larger number of people in every combatant country - wives and brothers, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers like Kathe and Karl Kollwitz - were in mourning. [That is the meaning] of Vladslo: in the midst of a Great War battlefield returned to farmland, holding together the remains of the fallen and the gestures of the survivors.

The story of the pilgrimage of one mother and father to their son's grave stands for millions of others. In August 1932 a war memorial was unveiled at the Roggevelde German war cemetery, near Vladslo in Flemish Belgium: a sculpture of two parents mourning their son, killed in October 1914. It is the work of Kathe Kollwitz. There is no more moving monument to the grief of those who lost their sons in the war than this simple stone sculpture of two parents, on their knees, before their son's grave.

There is no artist's signature, no location in time or space - only the universal sadness of two aged people, surrounded by the dead like 'a flock of lost children'. The phrase is Kathe Kollwitz's own. The story of her struggle to commemorate her son's death testifies both to her humanity and to her achievement in creating a timeless memorial, a work of art of extraordinary power and feeling.

In the spring of 1945, Kollwitz knew she was dying. 'War', she wrote in her last letter, 'accompanies me to the end.' She died on 22 April 1945, two weeks before the end of World War II.

The sculptress and graphic designer Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) lived and worked in Berlin for more than 50 years. She found many of her motifs in her immediate environment—a working district in Prenzlauer Berg, where her husband—at today's Kollwitzplatz—ran a medical practice. The large range of her work equally encompasses the important and serious life themes, such as sorrow, destitute and death, hunger and war, as well as the cheerful moments of life.