

Why and Where in Arolsen?

The *Central Tracing Bureau* (CTB), predecessor of the ITS and the later *Arolsen Archives*, moved to Arolsen in early 1946. There were various reasons for choosing this location. Arolsen was in the geographic center of the four occupation zones, so it could be easily reached by all parties of interest. Furthermore, the city had hardly been damaged in the war, so it had functioning telephone lines and intact buildings. The ITS was initially spread across sites all over the city, including the old school, both the Old and New Palace, and the barracks previously occupied by the SS. In 1952 the ITS moved into a main building on the Große Allee. Because the ITS was considered to finish its work soon, there were plans to later turn this building into a hotel. But the temporary measure turned into a permanent solution.



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1940s/1950s

Before moving into the former barracks in 1949, the ITS and its predecessor, the *Central Tracing Bureau* (CTB), were scattered across buildings throughout Arolsen. But these premises were too small for a constantly growing staff of well over 1,000 employees and the document collections.

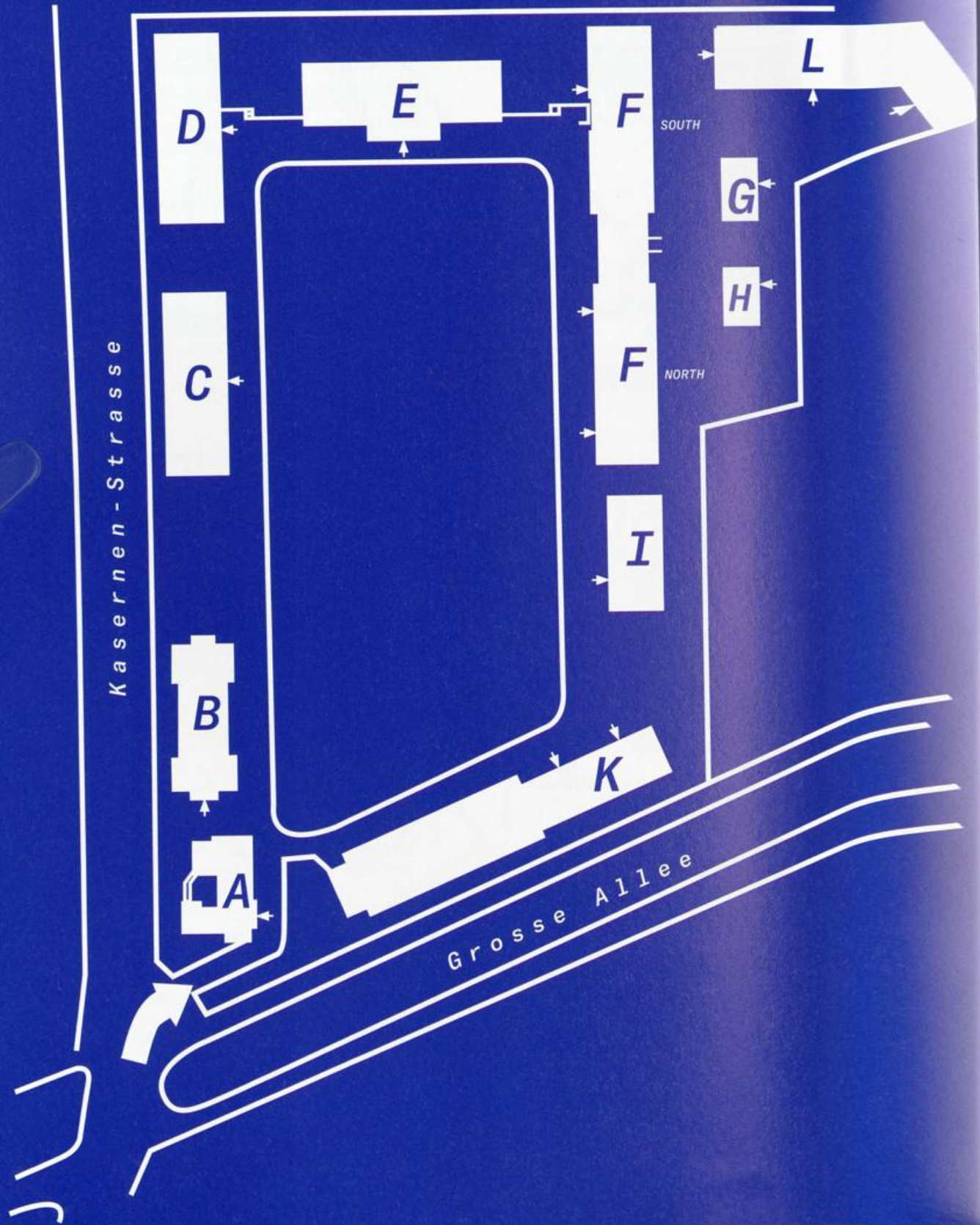
- 1 **Former school building | Große Allee 24**
01/1946 – 07/1947
Temporarily housed all CTB departments
- 2 **Block E | former SS barracks**
1945 – 1949
DP camp for employees
- 3 **New Palace | Große Allee 1-3**
06/1947 – ca. 1949
Temporarily housed all departments and quarters for DP employees
- 4 **Old Palace | Schloßstraße 27**
1947 – 1949
Temporarily housed the administration and executive office
- 5 **Kurhaus | Große Allee 23**
1947 – ca. 1949
Offices
- 6 **Unter den Eichen 2**
Autumn 1947 – ca. 1952
Temporarily housed the executive office, cafeteria, guesthouse, and employee quarters
- 7 **District administrator residence | Parkstraße 19**
Autumn 1947 – ca. 1952
Temporarily housed the cafeteria, staff management section, photo workshop, employee quarters
- 8 **Former SS barracks**
05/1949 – 10/1952
All ITS departments and quarters for DP employees
- 9 **Große Allee 25**
ca. 07/1952 – 10/1952
Infirmary for ITS employees, for some time housed quarters for DP employees
- 10 **Braunser Weg 8**
1952
Offices
- 11 **Main building | Große Allee 5-9**
since 10/1952
Various departments of the ITS and the *Arolsen Archives*
- 12 **Town hall | Große Allee 26**
since 1971
Arolsen Special Registry Office; only institution in the world which issues death certificates for concentration camp prisoners; has worked closely with the ITS and today's *Arolsen Archives*; was established in 1949 and initially also located in the former SS barracks.

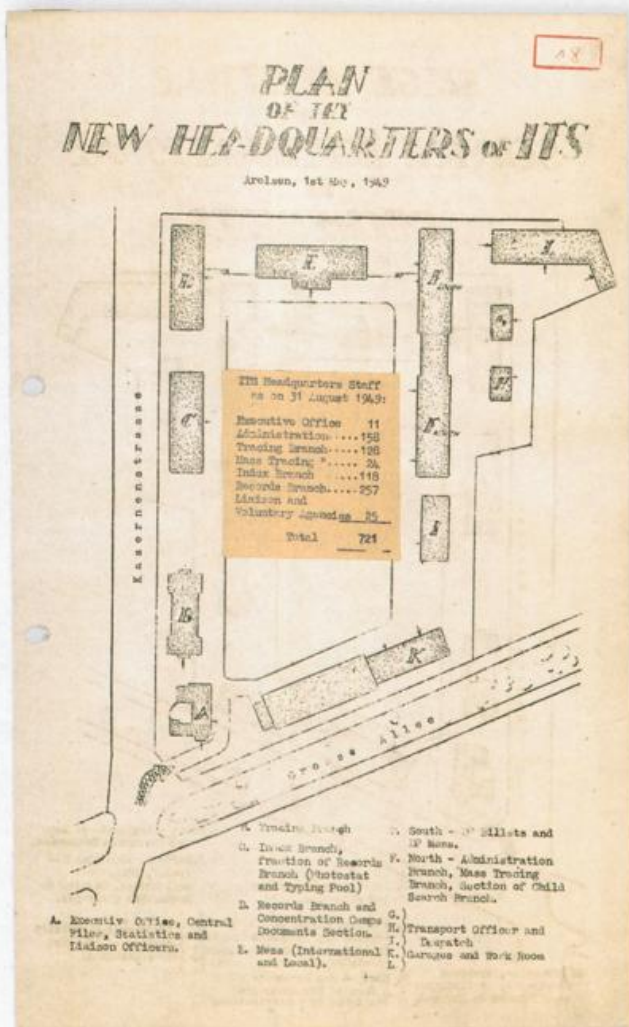
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From the 1980s

From the late 1980s the ITS rented many offices and storerooms in and around Arolsen. The intensified search for documents led to an increase in collections and staff. In this period, the ITS received hundreds of thousands of inquiries from former Nazi victims in Central and Eastern Europe who needed proof for pension or compensation claims.

- 13 **Wetterburgerstraße 4**
1978 – 1980
Card indexing department
- 14 **Haus am Park | Jahnstraße 7**
01/1980 – 2019
Temporarily housed various archival departments, general documents department, research room, indexing department
- 15 **Kurmittelhaus | Große Allee 3**
03/1989 – 01/2007
Storage of 250,000 *T/D files*
- 16 **Town hall, Marktplatz 2 | Mengerlinghausen**
07/1989 – 1993
Indexing department, mail room
- 17 **Haus Liebach | Kirchplatz 2**
10/1989 – 1996
Russian and Polish translators
- 18 **Haus Köbberling | Rathausstraße 1**
10/1989 – 2000
Wartime documents section
- 19 **Haus Füllgraf | Kaulbachstraße 4/6**
12/1991 – 2010
Temporarily housed indexing department, mail room, document acquisition office, central data processing unit
- 20 **Former elementary school | Große Allee 24**
04/1997 – 2009
Temporarily housed digitization department, general documents department, staff from the wartime and postwar documents section, Russian and Polish translators
- 21 **Kurhaus | Große Allee 23**
since 1999
Temporarily housed the indexing department, Russian and Polish translators, research and education department, library
- 22 **Former "Prinz Eugen" barracks | Hagenstraße 25**
January 2007 – March 2010
Storage of *T/D files*
- 23 **Former department store | Schloßstraße 10**
since 2009
Digitization department, storage of *T/D files*, exhibition space





Map of the *International Tracing Service (ITS)* in the Former Barracks, 1949

The location of the ITS was often discussed in the early days. Its previous premises were too small, so it moved into the former SS barracks in May 1949. The SS unit "Germania" had been housed there from 1935 to 1939, and from 1943 to 1945 it was the site of an SS leadership school and a Buchenwald subcamp known as "Arthur."



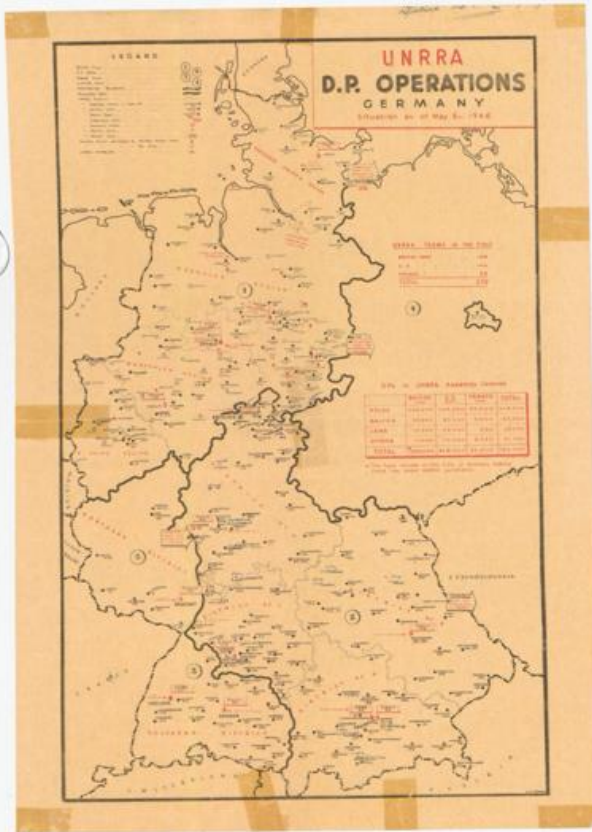
ITS Access Card for *Isolde Matzner*, Issued on September 1, 1949

ITS employees had to show identification when entering the former barracks. This access card allowed Isolde Matzner to enter and leave the area. An Arolsen resident, she worked for the ITS from 1949 to 1952.



Employees Crossing the Former Exercise Yard on their Way to Work, Arolsen, circa 1950

Some DP employees lived right in Block E of the former SS barracks. The canteen there was used as a function room for dances, bingo and games nights.



Sites and Operational Areas of the *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)* in Occupied Germany, May 8, 1946

After World War II, the Allied powers divided Germany into four occupation zones. UNRRA had already been created in 1943 to care for Displaced Persons (DPs): civilians from UN states, including former concentration camp prisoners and forced laborers, who were outside their countries of origin when the war ended.



ITS Headquarters, Arolsen, 1952

The entrance to the consolidated ITS site was the former staff building, with its conspicuous "International Tracing Service" sign above the main gate. Behind the gate was the building where employees signed in.



Records Branch Employees next to Concentration Camp Documents, Arolsen, circa 1950

The former barracks buildings had enough space for storing and clearly arranging the documents on shelves. This greatly reduced the time it took to handle inquiries.



Records Branch Employees next to Concentration Camp Documents, Arolsen, circa 1950

Shortly before the ITS moved in, the former barracks buildings were crudely renovated in April 1949. But this too was an interim solution, and documents were stored in a provisional way. In some places, it actually rained inside the work and storage rooms.



Dedication of the Building Shell with International Guests, Arolsen, August 20, 1952

A cake shaped like the new building was made for the dedication ceremony, which was attended by many international guests, including representatives of the French and British High Commissions, the head of the DP Branch of the *Allied High Commission* and the German Federal Minister for Refugee Affairs.



Dedication of the New ITS Main Building on the Große Allee, Arolsen, August 20, 1952

The ITS had to move out of the barracks in 1952, where Belgian NATO soldiers were soon stationed. A new building was erected in barely two months. At the end of October 1952 the employees moved into their new offices. The move from the former barracks to the new main building was partially carried out on bicycles.



ITS Main Building on the Große Allee, Arolsen, circa 1960

Because the future of the ITS was uncertain, the building was designed in a way that it could easily be turned into a hotel at a later time. But this temporary measure ultimately became a permanent solution. From the 1980s staff numbers rapidly increased and the ITS once again moved into several other buildings in Arolsen.

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Welcoming Speech of Mr. H.G. ELBOT, Chairman Executive Board ITS
on the occasion of the Dedication Ceremony of the ITS Administrative Building
on August 20, 1952.

Ladies and Gentlemen ! Distinguished Guests !

As Chairman of the Executive Board of the International Training Service I have the great pleasure of welcoming you to the Dedication Ceremony in the new building which will serve as future home of the ITS.

En ma qualité de président du Collège Exécutif du S.I.S. J'ai l'honneur de vous souhaiter la bienvenue à l'occasion de la cérémonie de scellement de ce bâtiment dans le nouveau bâtiment où le S.I.S. continuera ses activités passées.

Als Vorsitzender des Verwaltungsausschusses des Internationalen Schuldienstes habe ich die Ehre Sie willkommen zu heißen bei der Bestimmungsfest in Neubau des ITS.

Ladies and Gentlemen !

I am very happy today ! It was one year ago that we were first told that we would lose our office premises. Since then endless negotiations have followed. It was certain that we had to move out of there, but it was not at all certain that we would move in somewhere else and when that was finally decided the question was where to ? Medieval castles, broken down school buildings, bombed out barracks, abandoned factories were offered to us as our prospective home. Common sense, however, won out and it was decided to build for us a brand new home here in Arolsen.

Now the big question came up: who would give the money ? But again after maneuvering and negotiating, the solution was found and after an all record breaking construction period of only 6 weeks we have once again a roof over our heads and so today we can celebrate a happy end of our worries or as the Germans say "Ende gut, alles gut".

However, I am not 100 % happy. There is one wish which cannot be fulfilled, alas .. I wish that Uncle Joe could see us here. This is not a spy center, Uncle Joe, and this is not an atomic bomb factory either. This is a service dedicated to millions of innocent victims of war, dictatorship and intolerance and to their families. We serve the dead and the living, men and women, adults and children, Jews and gentiles, we serve all nationalities, the Germans, the Czechs, the Dutch, the Poles, we serve concentration camp victims regardless whether they were social democrats, liberals, communists or gypsies. We serve - period ! And who is this "we" ? This "we", Uncle Joe, is the free world.

7 years after

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7 years after the war we are still administering these archives of horror and out of these cards of death and torture we are squeezing hope, comfort and relief. And all this we are doing free of charge, as a public service with no strings attached whatsoever. In this sleepy little town of Arolsen, der Stadt im Walde, German personnel, and personnel of 25 other nationalities have for the past 6 years been working peacefully side by side in this service for humanity. This, Uncle Joe, is happening only a few miles off that heavy curtain behind which lies that fabulous paradise of the peoples' democracies.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the free world needs no advertising. Yet, if any of you ever should meet with one of these apostles from behind that curtain, just think of three short letters:

I. S. R.
the shop window of democracy !

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I call on the representative of that great nation which has made the main effort and has given the maximum support to ITS throughout its existence, Mr. Guy J. STOFF, Chief Displaced Populations Division, Office of the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany.

Mr. STOFF :

**Dedication Ceremony Speech by Hugh G. Elbot,
Chairman of the ITS Administration, August 20, 1952**

Against the backdrop of the Cold War, Hugh G. Elbot described the ITS as a "shop window of democracy". He stressed that the ITS was "a service dedicated to millions of innocent victims" and served "the dead and the living, men and women, adults and children, Jews and gentiles."