

COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES



EDUCATION PACK

VISIT – DISCOVER – SHARE



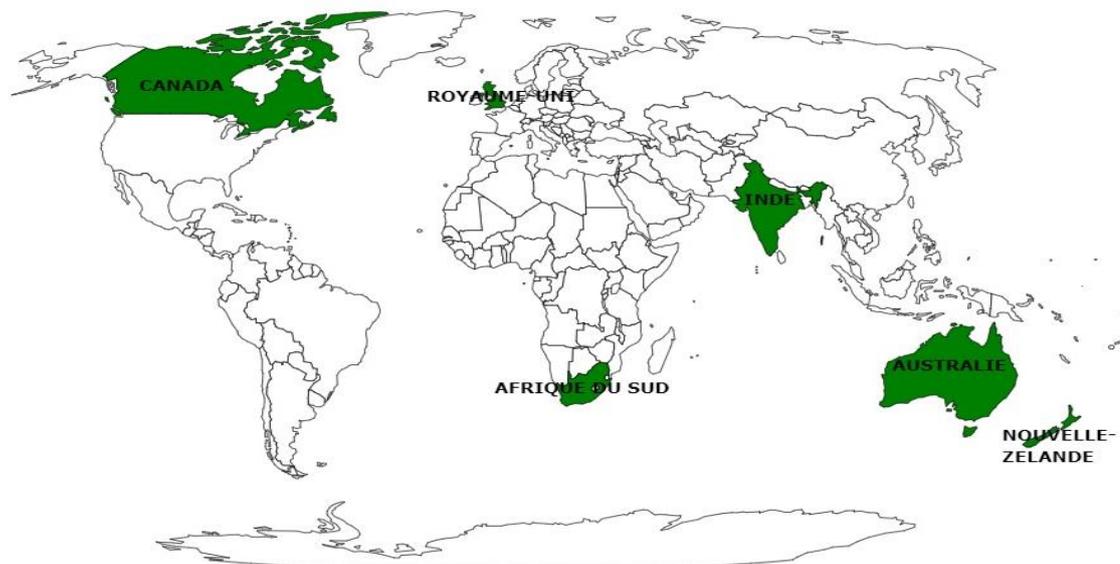
THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION: EXPLORING MEMORY ACROSS TIME

Preserving and Maintaining Remembrance



©CWGC

Created during the First World War by Sir Fabian Ware, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission honours and cares for the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, ensuring they will never be forgotten. Funded by six Member Governments, Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom, our work began with building, and now maintaining, cemeteries at 23,000 locations all over the world.



Today, over a century after we first began, our work continues through our staff, supporters and volunteers who preserve our unique cultural, horticultural and architectural heritage and ensure that the stories of those who died are told.

Creating a vision

Since the First World War, the landscaping of the Commonwealth cemeteries and memorials was guided by fundamental principles:

- Each of the Commonwealth dead should be commemorated by name on a headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform with no distinction for rank, status, race or faith



©CWGC

Common features of the CWGC cemeteries (a few cases excepted)



©CWGC

The headstones are inscribed the regimental badge, the soldier's name and details, the religious symbol and sometimes a personal inscription.



©CWGC

The Cross of Sacrifice, present in cemeteries holding more than 40 graves, is a reminder of the soldiers' sacrifice for their country.



©CWGC

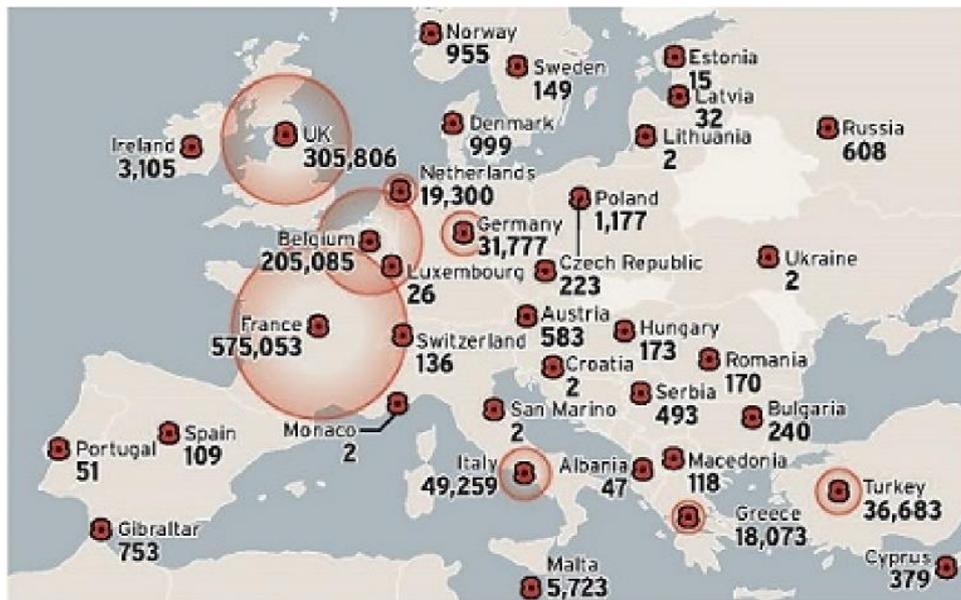
The Stone of Remembrance, present in cemeteries holding more than 400 graves, bears the inscription written in the Ecclesiastes chosen by Sir Rudyard Kipling, literary advisor for the IWGC: "*Their name Liveth For Evermore*"

The Memory of five continents in France

Based in Beaurains near Arras, the CWGC in France commemorates more than 570,000 Commonwealth soldiers who died during the First and Second World War.

It manages nearly 3,000 cemeteries and memorials, 1,300 of which are CWGC cemeteries, as well as graves in nearly 2,000 communal cemeteries.

In France, the CWGC employs close to 450 people, 320 of them gardeners allocated mainly to the Hauts de France and Normandy areas.



The memory of nearly 218,000 war casualties with no known grave is honoured on commemorative monuments to the missing. The largest of these is the Thiepval Memorial on the Somme.



Thiepval Memorial - ©Ian Alderman

The CWGC maintains the headstones and monuments honouring the 575,000 soldiers who died during the two World Wars.



Over 60 different nationalities have fought in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais



Over 3,000 sites in France including:

- 22 Memorials
- 1,278 military cemeteries
- 2,000 communal cemeteries



100,000 Commonwealth soldiers have no known grave in the Hauts-de-France

The CWGC employs 400 people including:



300 gardeners



60 craftsmen

THE CWGC EXPERIENCE: WORKSHOPS FOR THE WORLD

The CWGC Experience is a unique visitor attraction that shines a light on the work of the remarkable organisation at the heart of remembrance of the war dead. For the first time, visitors will be able to take a look behind-the-scenes at the work that is needed to commemorate the 1.7 million Commonwealth casualties from the First and Second World Wars.

Inaugurated on 26 June 2019, The CWGC Experience is not a museum dedicated to the 20th century conflicts but rather an interpretation centre on the work of the CWGC which connects the past to the present. Here you can visit the artisan workshops and discover for yourself the incredible care and attention which goes into our work.

Our free audio guide will walk you through each aspect of the work we do: from the story of how we still recover and rebury the dead today, to the skilled artisan craftsmen at work maintaining some of the world's most impressive and recognisable monuments and memorials.

The CWGC Experience was awarded the **Best Tourism Project in Europe** at the 2019 British Guild of Travel Writers' International Tourism Awards.



The CWGC Experience - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

What can you expect on your visit?

Fitted out around the workshops of the Commission, the CWGC Experience allows visitors to explore the crafts and knowledge of the CWGC staff. Everyone may organise their visit in the direction they choose and observe the works being made in real time thanks to the glazed workshops. You are able to explore the following themes;

- Headstone production
- Carpentry workshop
- Forge and the blacksmiths
- Horticulture and maintenance
- Sign production
- Recovery and Reburial

On arrival, all visitors are welcomed by a member of the Experience staff in the reception area. Each visitor is given a handset. The audio tour is divided into ten stages, starting with an Introductory film. This takes the visitor around the different workshops and explain the work of the CWGC. Occasionally, there are opportunities to engage with staff working in the workshops, especially if a large group is booked in. A 'Visitor Guide' is also given out which has a Site Map. The self-guided tour takes about 45mins to one hour.

There is also a small shop, vending machines and seating areas. IT terminals are also available to allow visitors to search the CWGC databases.



Headstone Production: the digital serving a timeless skill

Our production unit engraves thousands of headstones every year to be sent out to CWGC sites across the globe.

Engraving new headstones is sometimes necessary if:

- an existing headstone is broken or too damaged to be restored and preserved
- the body of a soldier has been found on former battlefields: whether identification is possible or not, he will be buried with military honours in a CWGC cemetery, and a headstone will be placed to mark his grave
- a soldier previously buried as unknown is identified thanks to historical research. A headstone bearing their name is then engraved to replace the anonymous headstone, and a rededication ceremony is held to mark the moment.



©CWGC

After the First World War when the work of the Commission started, the headstones were engraved by hand, but the task was huge, and that method did not meet the demand. As early as the 1920's, the CWGC designed a machine that could engrave headstones.

Today digital has revolutionised the way headstones are engraved: each of the four machines used can engrave up to four headstones at once. The headstone production unit now engraves about 3,000 headstones a year. That number was higher in the previous decades, when the preservation policy of the existing headstones was a lot more flexible: any headstone that seemed damaged was replaced. Now, through re-engraving on site, the important work of maintenance and conservation has allowed a significant decrease in the number of new headstones produced each year.



Headstone Production workshop - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

As time goes on, the stone erodes and the name and the details on them begin to fade. Hence, the headstones are regularly inspected to ensure that all inscriptions remain legible. As far as possible and when it's necessary, they are re-engraved by hand on site, at a rate of about 11,000 per year. Most of them are re-engraved in France and Belgium by specialised teams who are dedicated to the task of reengraving individual headstones, day after day. to ensure the inscriptions on headstones and memorials are legible. Preserving the Commission heritage is crucially important. A Portland headstone lasts around 80 years, and in the past it was systematically replaced upon reaching that age. Today, we do our best to preserve as many as possible by removing the dirt without damaging the stone through low pressure steam cleaning.



Perpetuating the traditions: The Carpentry Workshop

The CWGC cemeteries include a range of wooden features, particularly solid doors and gates, benches and ornamental pergolas. Some wooden pieces are even used underground to align the graves intended for recently discovered remains.

Where the most sophisticated machinery is used for headstone production, the CWGC's highly skilled carpenters use traditional methods, avoiding using nails and glue when possible in favour of wooden pegs.

Some wooden features are nearly a hundred years old : they are preserved and restored as far as possible. If the original feature can not be restored, our carpenters make a new piece by hand, all the while staying as faithful as possible to the original. Wood is carefully selected and must dry outside for eight years before being ready to be worked on. The CWGC uses the equivalent of half a dozen tree trunks every year.



Samuel, carpenter for 13 years at the Commission - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

Sculpting Memory: The Blacksmith's Forge

A wide range of elements present in the cemeteries, from iron forged hinges to intricate and sophisticated larger gates are produced in the blacksmith's workshop.

Each item is unique, forged specifically for the CWGC sites. One example is the doors of the bronze boxes found in every cemetery in which are held the registers listing those buried or commemorated on the site. The elements that make them up are not mass produced and each piece bears specific features that our CWGC blacksmith Christian Cousin must work with. The bronze swords ornamenting the Crosses of sacrifice are also made here and vary according to the size of the stone cross.



Whenever possible, the blacksmith uses traditional methods, and his workshop does not contain many machines. Very little welding is done, so that every feature can be entirely dismantled: an hour is sometimes required to make just one link in the structure of a gate. The forge is intended to the creation of curved elements like foliage or ornamental hinges, and to the repair of some of the tools used by our staff.



Christian, CWGC blacksmith for 30 years ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

Those traditional methods do not prevent us from using new techniques. Recently, 3D digital imagery has helped us replace damaged parts of a metallic statue which is part of the Mombasa Memorial in Kenya.



©CWGC

Cultivating Memory: Horticulture and Maintenance

More than half of the 710 hectares of ground maintained by the CWGC are dedicated to ornamental horticulture, which has always been integral to the design of the cemeteries and memorials. Partly to offer some comfort to relatives who could come in person to put flowers on the grave of a loved one but also because it is an essential element of how cemeteries were envisioned, as they were not to be seen as gloomy places. By listing the conceptual principles of the IWGC, the Kenyon Report described in 1918 that “the stillness of the lawn and the radiance of the flowers” could contribute to making cemeteries places of inspiration rather than sadness.



©CWGC

The look of the sites is inspired by traditional English gardens, with borders containing a variety of coloured plants – particularly roses – following a repetitive motive. The relation between a cemetery and the surrounding landscape also plays a big part, and plants from the local natural habitat are used wherever possible. Many of the architectural plans stored in the CWGC Archives show planting styles. During its first years, the Commission consulted the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew for some advice and samples. The horticulturist Gertrude Jekyll, a close friend of Sir Edwin Lutyens – one of the main Commission architects – gave some advice about the design of some cemeteries. Her suggestions however were not put in place, although her earlier work was an inspiration for Lutyens.



©CWGC

When the formal work of the Commission began after the war, gardeners were faced with harsh, brutal conditions, sometimes dangerous on former battlefields. They would go to isolated areas to establish a campsite for several days or months in places where live ammunition could often still be found. Some members of staff were even given weapons to protect themselves against looters. When permanent gardeners were assigned to the main cemeteries, they were housed in base camps.

Today the gardeners are faced with new challenges. Some are positive, like the increasing visits of our sites, and others a lot less, particularly extreme environmental conditions. Thus the lawns used in most of our paths is very exposed to bad weather. In ill-suited places, the lawn is replaced with stones, pebbles and ornamental sand.



Trekopje Cemetery, Namibie ©CWGC

The CWGC is one of the largest gardening organisations in the world. It uses various machines in more than 23,000 sites, most of them dealing with very different environmental conditions. All the machines used across the whole France area are maintained in the Beaurains workshops.

80 different types of lawnmowers are used worldwide as well as “edge-cutters” to have neat regular edges, special hedge-trimmers to maintain topiary shapes... Edge-cutters are specially designed to make sharp clear cuts both quickly and precisely. The CWGC gardeners travel the equivalent of twice around the world with this machine each year!

Near the mechanic workshop, a window display reminds us how technology has evolved during the first 100 years of the CWGC. Shredding lawnmowers have recently been introduced to turn the soil nutrients over. However, our gardeners still very often rely on traditional manual equipment. Despite the wide array of machines used by the Commission, an important part of the work is still done by hand: traditional tools are the best way to maintain the high standards CWGC gardeners pride themselves on. A great number of the tools displayed will be familiar to any gardener: rakes, spades, trowels and hoes. Every day, thousands of those tools are used in our cemeteries. In some countries, the gardeners use more unusual tools: a Panga machete for example, an ideal way to cut down lush vegetation in Kenya.



Jocelyn and Jacky in the mechanic workshop - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

Finding and positioning: The Signs Production Workshop

For decades, people have come from around the globe to visit CWGC cemeteries and memorials looking for family, friends or just wanting to immerse themselves in the feelings of the CWGC cemeteries.



©CWGC

The Signs Production Workshop makes 300 signs a year to allow visitors to find our sites anywhere in the world. At the end of the First World War, people often came to the Western Front with only faint geographical notions: that is why the Commission installed the first sign, to direct them around the battle-scarred lands. Moreover, the names of the cemeteries often took on the popular names used by the soldiers to designate places or bases during the war, which did not make things easy as they often had nothing to do with the local place naming.

At the back of the signs workshop are some original Imperial War Graves Commission plaques. Today, the CWGC signs can be recognised anywhere in the world and are manufactured in many different languages.



The signs production workshop - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

Recovery and Reburial

After the First World war, the British army spent years looking for the bodies of the soldiers. Today there are still thousands of men listed as missing.



©CWGC

In France alone, the remains of about 50 Commonwealth soldiers who died on the battlefield are found each year. Due to large works projects taking place over coming years, that number may rise in a significant way. Most of the human remains found in France are discovered on First World War battlefields in the Hauts-de-France.



Steve Arnold, exhumation officer - ©CWGC/Samuel Dhote

On the Beaurains' site is a morgue where the soldiers' remains as well as their private belongings which are found alongside them are kept, until they are ready to be buried in a CWGC cemetery.

When remains are found and their nationality is confirmed, it is the government of the soldier's native country that takes charges of searching for his identity and organising the burial ceremony, whether the identity of the soldier is found or not.

Whenever possible, recovered soldiers are buried in a cemetery located near the place where they have been found, alongside their former comrades, if they could be identified. In 2009, previously unknown were discovered near Fromelles in the Nord region. In July 1916, several battles were fought by Australian and British units in the area. following archaeological excavations, it became obvious that the mass graves held hundreds of soldiers and it was decided to build a new cemetery, *Pheasant Wood Cemetery* in Fromelles. It was the first time in over 50 years that the CWGC undertook the construction of a brand-new cemetery. Today, 250 British and Australian soldiers are buried there.



Pheasant Wood Cemetery ©CWGC

TO FIND OUT MORE...

The CWGC Casualty Database allows for research on a soldier and on the cemeteries and memorials maintained by the CWGC. The database, only available in English, is available at this address: www.cwgc.org.



The screenshot shows the CWGC website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the CWGC logo on the left, followed by links for 'FIND RECORDS', 'VISIT US', 'OUR WORK', and 'WHO WE ARE'. On the right side of the navigation bar, there are links for 'Join The Foundation' and 'Login'. Below the navigation bar, the main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, under the heading 'FIND RECORDS', there is a list of links: 'Find War Dead', 'CWGC Archive', 'About our records', and 'Commemorations'. On the right, under the heading 'EXPLORE THE RECORDS OF THE CWGC', there are three featured cards. The first card is titled 'Find War Dead' and includes an image of three soldiers in uniform looking at a large wall of records. The second card is titled 'CWGC Archive' and includes an image of several old, leather-bound books. The third card is titled 'About our records' and includes an image of a document with a red stamp. Each card has a short description of the service it provides.

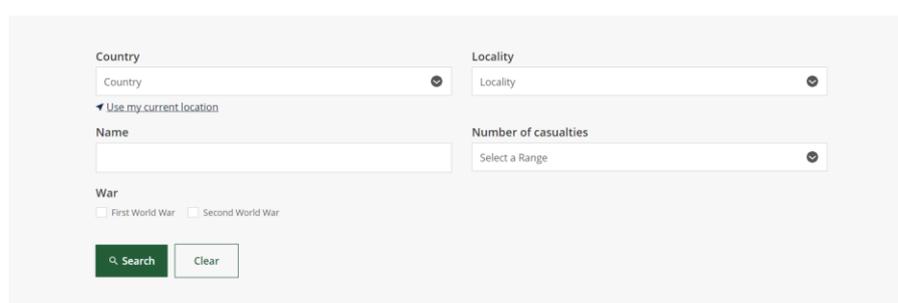
Searching for a soldier

- Connect to the CWGC website on the following address: www.cwgc.org
- Go to the drop-down menu "Find Records", then "Find War Dead"
- Enter the family name of the soldier then « search » to make results appear.

Similar databases exist to allow you to research a French soldier (<https://www.memoiredeshommes.sga.defense.gouv.fr/>) or a German soldier (<https://www.volksbund.de/graebersuche.html>).

Finding a cemetery

- Connect to the CWGC website on the following address: www.cwgc.org
- Go to the drop-down menu "Visit Us", then "Find Cemeteries and Memorials" to find a cemetery or a memorial
- You can search according to the name of the site that interests you, or the place where they can be found or by searching for sites near the city that interests you.



The screenshot shows a search form on the CWGC website. It has several input fields: 'Country' (a dropdown menu), 'Locality' (a dropdown menu), 'Name' (a text input field), and 'Number of casualties' (a dropdown menu). There is also a checkbox for 'Use my current location' and a 'War' section with radio buttons for 'First World War' and 'Second World War'. At the bottom of the form, there are two buttons: 'Search' and 'Clear'.

Touch screens are available the CWGC Experience for you to use to research our databases.

CONTINUING YOUR DISCOVERY

Any visit to the CWGC Experience should be done together with a visit to some of our local cemeteries and memorials. It is possible to visit our cemeteries and memorials independently. They are all accessible freely and open every day, save for exceptions.

You might see our teams at work in the emblematic CWGC cemeteries and memorials.



Headstone re-engraving being done in one of the cemeteries maintained by the CWGC ©CWGC

[Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery](#) in Souchez



This cemetery takes its name after a small red brick café that was close by which was destroyed in 1915. It is the largest CWGC cemetery in the Arras surroundings with more than 7,650 graves.

The layout of the graves in this cemetery is particularly attractive.

[Bailleul Road East Cemetery](#) in Saint-Laurent-Blangy



This cemetery holds 1,300 graves, with among them that of Isaac Rosenberg, one of the most famous British war poets (*'Break of the Day in the Trenches'*, *'Dead Man's Dump'*, *entre autres*) who lost his life in 1918.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Find us

The interpretation centre *The CWGC Experience* can be found south of Arras, close to the First World War battlefields:

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission
5-7 rue Angele Richard
62217 Beaurains
France

Contact us

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Opening times

The CWGC Experience is open from Monday to Friday, from 9 am to 4 pm without interruption. It is closed at weekends, Bank Holidays (save for exceptional opening), and in December and January for maintenance.

Book your visit

A booking is necessary for groups over 12 people.

The booking of a visit slot can be done directly on our website thanks to this address:

<http://www.planyo.com/booking/CWGC-Experience>

Upon booking please give the name of the person in charge of the group with his/her contact details, the total number of the group, the type of public, the date of visit as well as the time of arrival preferred.

A booking voucher, taking up the terms and conditions of the visit will be sent by mail to the group, who will have to send back a dated copy signed by the person in charge of the group or the school principal.

Prepare your trip

A pre-visit of the interpretation centre with a guide can be organised before your tour with the group.

To book a pre-visit, a guided tour, please contact us beforehand at the address cwgcxperience@cwgc.org.

Developing a project

If you have any particular plans, you can contact our education service

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- Delphine Dufour - professeur missionnée DAAC (Délégation Académique au Arts et à la Culture)
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Duration of the tour: 1 hour – Maximum number of students per tour: 25

Plan to arrive 15 minutes before the beginning of the tour.

Toilets are available. Be advised that we do not have a picnic area.

Free audio guides available in French and English

We also offer free guided tours for primary school pupils, secondary schools and high schools upon reservation.

Fares

The fares are :

- 20 euros for groups of 12 to 20 people
- 50 euros for groups of over 20 people.