

DISCOVERING LOCAL CWGC WAR GRAVES IN THE UK

Harrogate Stonefall Cemetery



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission

FOREWORD

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is delighted to support Never Such Innocence in its ground-breaking arts initiative for schools. We have been supporting NSI's events for the last two years, but this is the first time that we have provided practical resources for schools.

Our objective is to encourage schools to take an interest in war graves here in the UK. CWGC's war graves are not just on the Western Front, they are here in the towns and cities – where the hospitals were. They are also here in village churchyards, when the families managed to bring their boys home.

This resource pack tells you how to use our website database to track down the details for the area where your schools are situated.

There are 300,000 war graves and memorials from the two World Wars right here in the UK. They are largely overlooked. It is time that this changed.

**Colin Kerr
Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

I am delighted to be writing a foreword for a brilliant and important resource – Over the last two years my charity Never Such Innocence has worked closely with our partners the CWCG.

Our vision is to ensure that young people, nationally, are given the opportunity to play their part, engage and feel important during this centenary period. We want to help you understand the complexities of war and the vital importance of the sacrifices our forces made 100 years ago and today. This resource will help you to do just that.

The CWCG is an organisation very close to my heart. I was privileged to go to the battlefields as a 13 year old girl, I was humbled by what I saw, and inspired by the extraordinary work of the CWGC. They lovingly tend the graves of the fallen from both World Wars, across the world. You will discover from your research, aided by this pack, war graves in cities, towns and villages near your homes and schools. I hope you will seek them out and read the names of the fallen and remember them –these graves, these men and women, are great inspiration for your poems and art. This resource will help you to unlock living histories and family stories, perhaps even your own. The website database is yours to discover.

**Lady Lucy French
Chair, Never Such Innocence**

INTRODUCTION

You may be surprised to learn that there are over **172,000 war graves** from the First and Second World Wars at **13,000 locations** throughout the United Kingdom.

Wherever you are in the UK there are likely to be war graves within only **two to three miles from you**. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) would encourage you to **discover** and then **explore your local war graves**.

The CWGC is the organisation responsible for the commemoration of almost 1,700,000 members of the British Commonwealth forces who gave their lives in the two World Wars. The graves and memorials of these men and women, who came from all parts of the Commonwealth and who were of many faiths and of none, are found around the globe in 154 countries.

The CWGC has some founding principles that govern how individuals whom lost their lives should be commemorated. Each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on grave headstone or by an inscription on a CWGC memorial. The headstones and memorials should be permanent and uniform in style. This means that there should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race, or creed.

In contrast to the CWGC owned military cemeteries on the continent, the vast majority of UK locations are owned or operated by local authorities, churches and even private companies and individuals. It is their responsibility to care for the cemetery as a whole, with the CWGC taking a specific interest in the care of any war graves in each site.

The practice of non-repatriation of the dead which was established during the First World War meant that Commonwealth servicemen and women who died on active service abroad, were buried abroad. This means that their remains were not brought home to the United Kingdom and are often buried near the location where they died.

Features of CWGC locations around the world often include a Cross of Sacrifice, a large monument in the shape of a cross with a Crusader Sword built into the stone. The cross represents the faith of the majority. In larger sites a Stone of Remembrance can be found. This is a rectangular shaped monument with the wording 'Their name liveth forevermore'. The stone represents those of all faiths and none.

Here in the United Kingdom are the graves for many of those whom died in military hospitals. They would then be buried in local cemeteries in many UK towns and cities. Others graves may well be for men and women who died in training accidents or air raids. Others were killed in action in the air or at sea in coastal waters, with their bodies washed ashore. Many war graves are for those whom succumbed to the Spanish Influenza epidemic at the end of the First World War.

For most of these casualties, the UK was their home. As wartime service burials for those who died in their own country were not strongly regulated, they were laid to rest not only in war cemeteries but in locations chosen by their families, often in family graves scattered throughout cemetery grounds.

The graves of those for whom the UK was not home are centred in areas where there were military training camps and hospitals and, during the Second World War, air force bases from which Commonwealth squadrons operated.

Over 100,000 names are listed on CWGC memorials in the UK including Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Tower Hill and Runnymede. These CWGC memorials reflect the nature of warfare at sea or in the air. Often their bodies were never recovered and to comply with the founding principles that everybody must be commemorated these great memorials were constructed.



Plymouth Naval Memorial courtesy of Mike St Maur Sheil

Five cemeteries in the UK are directly controlled and cared for by CWGC staff and bear the strongest comparisons to those overseas. Between them they contain approximately 8,500 war graves. They are: Brookwood Military Cemetery; Cambridge City Cemetery; Cannock Chase War Cemetery; Newark Upon Trent Cemetery and Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery.



Cambridge City Cemetery



A memorial to the missing at Brookwood Military Cemetery



Cannock Chase War Cemetery

The design of these cemeteries allows the CWGC to establish and maintain flower borders and turf similar to those in war cemeteries overseas.

In both World Wars, land was set aside by cemetery authorities and churches specifically for war burials. There are about 600 of these plots, containing between them 20,000 graves. These plots generally contain horticultural and structural features common to the Commonwealth war cemeteries abroad. Depending on the numbers buried these sites

will often include a Cross of Sacrifice or Stone of Remembrance.

Individual graves account for the great majority of war burials in the UK and are to be found in every conceivable type of burial ground – including many local churchyards. The majority are marked with Commission headstones but a significant number, over 30,000, are marked by private memorials chosen by relatives at the time.



Private memorials at Oxford Botley and Queensferry Cemeteries



Private memorials at Oxford Botley and Queensferry Cemeteries

FEATURES OF CWGC SITES

On visiting a larger plot of war graves in the UK there may be additional features that are often found in many of our cemeteries around the world



Oxford Botley, Queensferry, and Southampton Hollybrook Cemeteries

The Cross of Sacrifice above can often be found in cemeteries where there are more than 40 war graves. The Stone of Remembrance below can be found in cemeteries where there are usually more than 1,000 war graves.



Harrogate Stonefalls Cemetery



Oxford Botley Cemetery

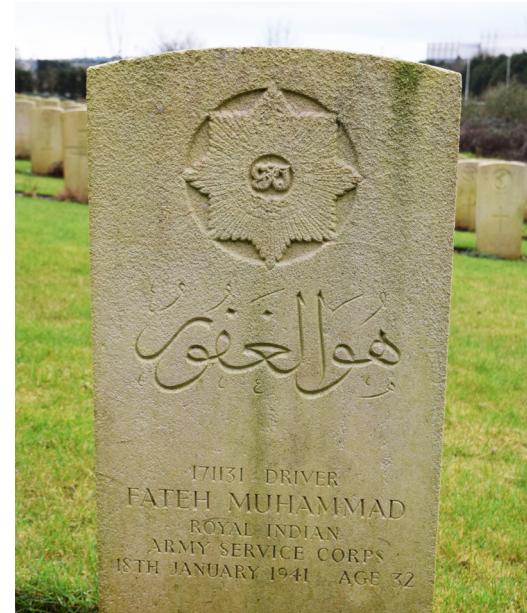
When visiting your location you will recognise war graves by the distinct CWGC deign headstone. The type of stone used may vary but the style is the same that you will soon learn to recognise.



Glasgow Western Necropolis Cemetery

The stone itself should be in good condition. Each site is inspected on a 3-4 year cycle by one of eleven Regional Supervisors, who check for accessibility, legibility and damage and, if necessary, arrange for replacement headstones to be produced and erected. In addition, teams from the CWGC clean the headstones on a cyclical basis, every 2-3 years.

When reading a CWGC headstone they all share the same layout. At the top of the headstone is the regimental badge or national emblem. Below this are the details for the person buried there, then the religious emblem and finally at the bottom the personal inscription. The personal inscriptions are often fascinating to read, they were selected by the family and often give an insight into the loss felt by the family.



Plymouth Weston Mill Cemetery

FINDING LOCAL WAR GRAVES

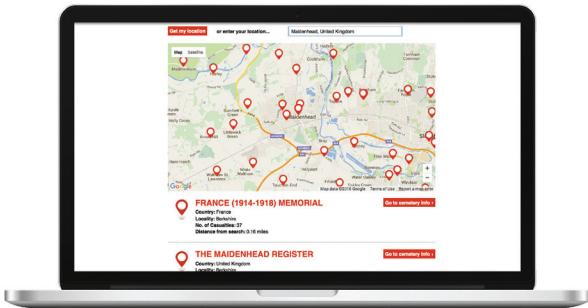
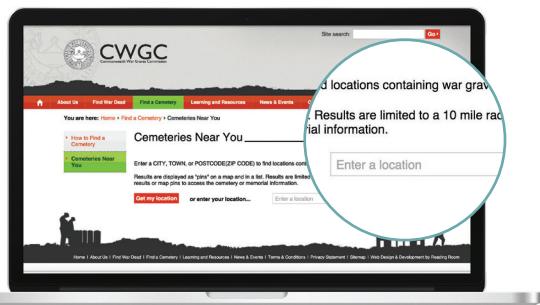
By visiting the CWGC website www.cwgc.org you can find where are your nearest war graves. With 13,000 locations across the United Kingdom you might be surprised by how many locations are so close.



On the front page of our website you will notice a box like the one on the left.

Click on 'Find a Cemetery' and you will then find the option shown 'Find Nearby Cemeteries'.

You will then be presented with the box on the right allowing you to either use information from the 'Get my location' button or you can enter a location of your choice in the free text box.



Your results are then shown as a map as detailed on the left. Underneath the map will be a list of locations. The list will detail the name of the location, the number of people commemorated and its distance from the entered location.

FINDING A PARTICULAR PERSON ON THE CWGC DATABASE

The CWGC database lists details of all the 1.7 Commonwealth forces war dead from the two world wars and where they are commemorated. It is a simple to use tool and will allow you to find details of those buried in your chosen location.

Once you have chosen your location you can search for the details of a particular named grave. Alternatively you can search for those in a particular location and gain details for all of those commemorated there.

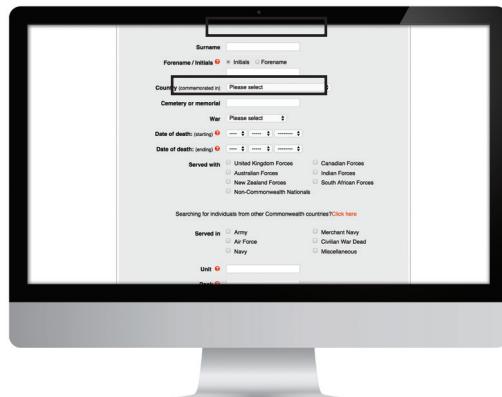
Step 1

From the CWGC website,www.cwgc.org
click on 'Advanced Search'.



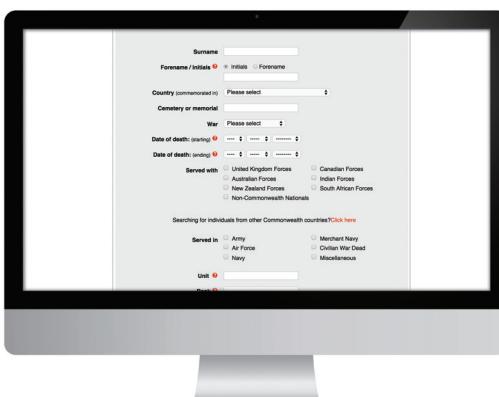
Step 2

Enter the known information of surname
and location of the cemetery.



Step 3

Click on the search button at the bottom
of the screen you will generate the results.



Step 4

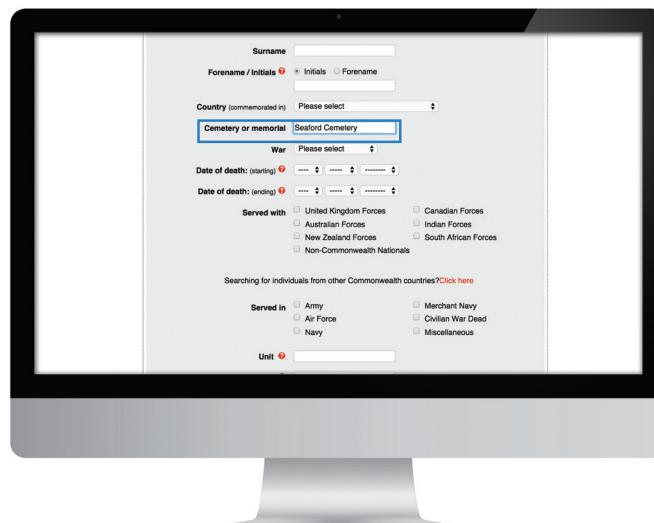
By clicking on the name in red you then
generate details of the person.



FINDING DETAILS OF A WAR GRAVE IN A CWGC SITE

Step 1

Insert the name of the cemetery into the advanced search function of the database.



Step 2

Having clicked on the search button you will then generate the results for the cemetery. In the example shown there are 275 graves in Seaford Cemetery.

A screenshot of a computer monitor displaying the CWGC website's search results page for 'Seaford Cemetery'. The results table shows 275 records matching the search criteria. The columns include Name, Rank, Service Number, Date of Birth, Age, Regiment / Service, Service Country, Grave / Memorial Reference, Cemetery / Memorial Name, and Date of Death. The results list several individuals, such as Abbott, James, Adams, H, Ahola, D, Alexander, H, and Anderson, M, with their respective details like rank (Sapper, Captain, Private, Sapper), service number, date of birth, age at death, regiment (e.g., Canadian Forestry Corps, Canadian Engineers), service country (Canadian), grave reference (e.g., A. 464, A. 721), cemetery name (Seaford Cemetery), and date of death (e.g., 18/03/1919, 15/04/1918). A blue callout bubble on the right side of the screen contains the text: 'You can then download all of these results into an Excel spreadsheet by clicking on the 'Download results' page.'

Name	Rank	Service Number	Date of Birth	Age	Regiment / Service	Service Country	Grave / Memorial Reference	Cemetery / Memorial Name	Date of Death
ABBOTT, JAMES HECTOR	Sapper	202300	18/03/1919	29	Canadian Engineers	Canadian	A. 464.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
ADAMS, H	Captain		15/04/1918	42	Canadian Forestry Corps	Canadian	2021.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
AHOLA, D	Private	200441	11/02/1919	21	Canadian Forestry Corps	Canadian	2022.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
ANTHONY, JAMES	Sapper	201405	23/03/1919	21	Canadian Engineers	Canadian	A. 721.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
ALEXANDER, H	Sapper	200585	04/11/1918	26	Canadian Engineers	Canadian	A. 454.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
ANDERSON, M	Private	200050	06/07/1919	36	Canadian Army Service Corps	Canadian	3008	SEAFORD CEMETERY	
ANTHONY, JAMES	Sapper	5017	28/05/1919	35	Canadian Engineers	Canadian	A. 2073.	SEAFORD CEMETERY	

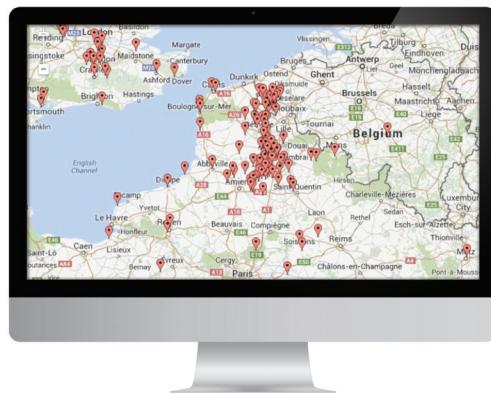
You can then download all of these results into an Excel spreadsheet by clicking on the 'Download results' page.

FINDING WAR GRAVES FOR THOSE FROM YOUR COMMUNITY AROUND THE WORLD

Within your community there is likely to be a war memorial or a local roll of honour. If you make a point of recording these names you will be able to look their details up on our database.

You may have to use some of your detective skills and use some of the additional fields on the advanced search screen.

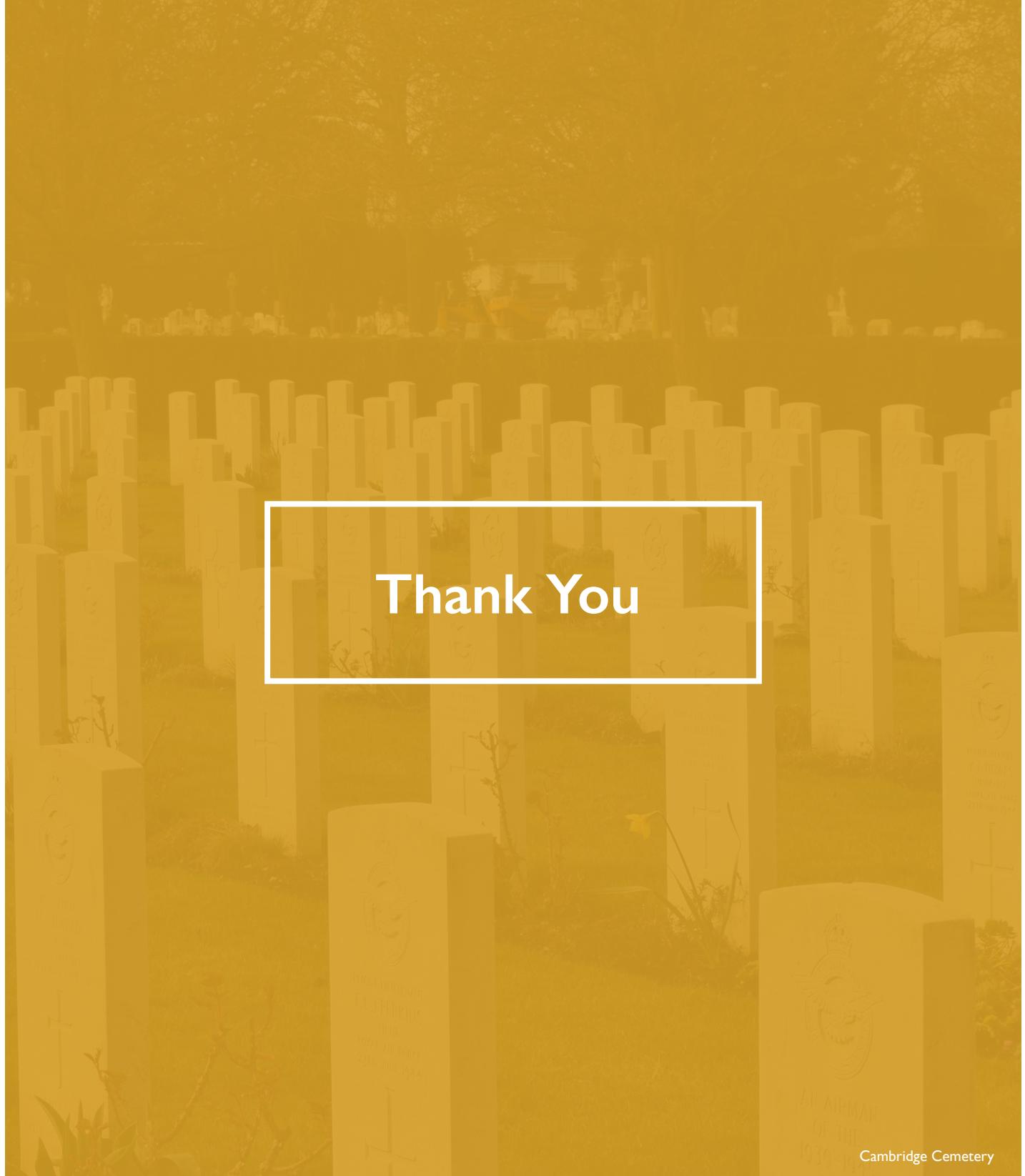
A very useful feature is to use the additional information tab, by adding a location you will generate a list of all those records that include that place name on our records.



By searching the database by simply entering a place name you will be able to download a list of all those whom have that location in our records.

By simply using a map and pins you could plot where those from your community are commemorated today. You might be surprised by the range of countries where those from your community died during the two world wars.

There are other ways of displaying the location of war graves, for example entering the information on free software to create a map like these ones.



Thank You

Cambridge Cemetery



CWGC
Commonwealth War Graves Commission