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COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
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RESEARCHING A COMMISSION CEMETERY OR MEMORIAL SITE - GUIDANCE SHEET



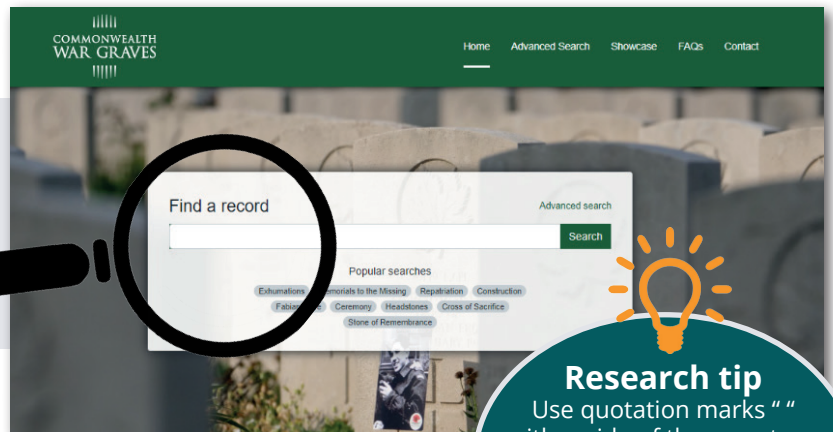
This bitesize guide is designed to help you research a Commission cemetery or memorial site using the CWGC Archive Catalogue to locate and access records relating to the site and which cover aspects including design, construction, unveiling, and maintenance.

STEP 1: Open our online archive catalogue: <http://archive.cwgc.org/>

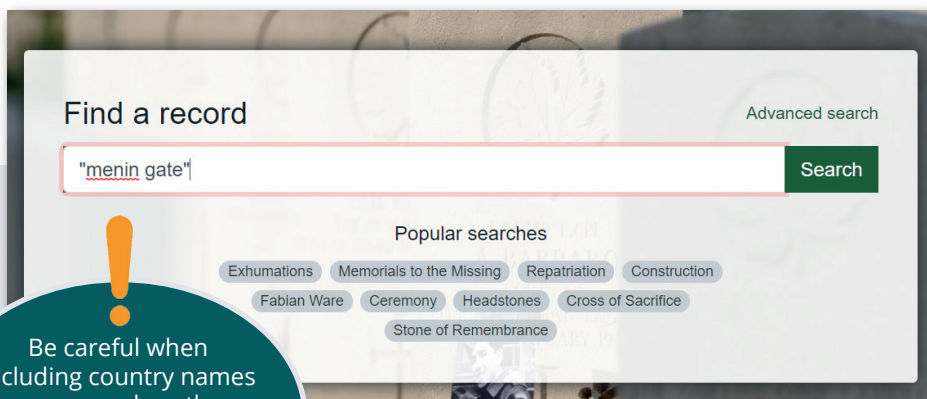


Need help..?
Consult the CWGC
Archive Catalogue
User Guide

Start by entering
the site name in the
white box under
'Find a record'



Research tip
Use quotation marks " " either side of the cemetery or memorial name when searching the catalogue for more accurate results.



Be careful when including country names in your search as these can change over time and may be reflected differently in the records.

For this guide, we will be looking for records for the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial in Belgium. We will start by entering "menin gate" in the Quick Search box as seen in the image above, including the quotation marks.

You will then get a list of the results...

Unique ID	Title	Description	Date	File Number	Thumbnail
ADD 9/2/7	Ypres - Pilgrimages and Commemorations	File of MS. and duplicated papers, postage stamps and printed leaflet. Main topics: commemorations of founding of Ypres; outbreak of the First World War and the Battle of Passchendaele; involving references to British institutions in the town (St. H. Saint George's church, Last Post; the Commission) and other national war graves and war graves organisations.	1/1/1964 - 31/12/1977	ADD 8/2/7	
ADD 8/1/2	Photos of Vandalism and Wear and Tear	Folder containing photographs showing vandalism and general wear and tear damage at various Commission sites including: New Irish Farm Cemetery, Vimy Canadian Memorial, Beth Canadian Infantry Battalion Memorial, Post Office Rifles Cemetery, St. Vaast Post Military Cemetery, Le Quensroy New Zealand Memorial, Suez War Memorial Cemetery, Halfaya Solum War Cemetery, Elaziz Cemetery, Bellincourt Memorial, Menin Gate Memorial, Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Nunhead Cemetery, Tower Hamlets Cemetery, Oldlands New Communal Cemetery.	1961 - 1968	ADD 9/1/2	
ADD 11/1/16	Architects Tour Reports 1954-1966	Box of 8 folders containing tour reports, notes and photographs taken during visits by Senior Architect.	1954-1966	ADD 11/1/16	
ADD 11/1/17	Architects Tour Reports 1967-1976	Box of 6 folders containing tour reports, notes and photographs taken during visits by Senior Architect and Assistant Director of Works, with some loose photographs of various sites.	1967-1976	ADD 11/1/17	
ADD 12/1/22	Burning In-Fill Demonstration Panel from the Menin Gate			ADD 12/1/22	

The search results display all of the records where the search term (in this example "menin gate") appears in the description of the record.

Be aware,
Be aware, not all records listed on the catalogue have been digitised. Look out for records with a thumbnail image visible on the search results; this will indicate that digitised material is available to access.

Alternatively, the Advanced Search function can be used to carry out a more specific search for records relating to a particular cemetery or memorial site.

There are multiple ways to open the Advanced Search:

1. Either from the main page of the online catalogue:

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

Home **Advanced Search** Showcase FAQs Contact

Find a record

Advanced search

Search

Popular searches

Exhumations Memorials to the Missing Repatriation Construction Fabian Ware Ceremony Headstones Cross of Sacrifice Stone of Remembrance

Click "Advanced Search" in either of these places

2. Or from the Search Results page:

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

Home **Advanced Search** Showcase FAQs Contact

Search Results

Refine Search

Unique ID	Title	Description	Date	File Number	Thumbnail
ADD 9/2/7	Ypres - Pilgrimages and Commemorations	File of MS. and duplicated papers, postage stamps and printed leaflet. Main topics: commemorations of founding of Ypres; outbreak of the First World War and the Battle of Passchendaele; involving references to British institutions in the town (St. H. Saint George's church, Last Post; the Commission) and other national war graves and war graves organisations.	1/1/1964 - 31/12/1977	ADD 8/2/7	
ADD 9/2/9	British War Cemeteries 1914-1918 Ypres	Booklet containing postcard sized black and white photographs of various cemeteries in the vicinity of Ypres, including some showing cemeteries still being constructed.	1/1/1928 - 31/1/1935	ADD 8/2/9	

Photographic Collection

Useful Links

CWGC Main Site

CWGC Online Exhibition

Discovery, the National Archives catalogue

The Imperial War Museum Collections

The National Army Museum

The Royal Air Force Museum

The Royal Navy Loss List

Click "Refine Search" to open the Advanced Search function

The screenshot shows the 'Advanced Search' interface. It features several search criteria sections: 'Unique ID', 'Any Text', 'Refine Search Criteria', 'Date', 'File Number', and 'Records with images'. The 'Refine Search Criteria' section is expanded, showing 'Title' and 'Scanned records' as options. The 'Title' field contains the text 'menin gate' and is circled in black. The 'Scanned records' field contains an asterisk '*' and is also circled in black. Below the search fields are 'Search' and 'Clear' buttons.

Once the Advanced Search is open, the simplest way to look for a cemetery or memorial is to type the cemetery or memorial name into the **Title** search field.

You do not have to be strictly accurate in how this is done. For example, if you were looking for records relating to The Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial a search for "Ypres Gate", "Menin Gate", "Ypres Memorial" or "Menin Memorial" would all return records in the search results (along with any other records which contained those search terms in its title).

We are also going to add an asterisk (*) in the **Scanned records** search field. By doing this, we can display only those records relating to the Menin Gate with digitised material in the search results.

By default, a search will look for the word or words you have entered. However, you can choose to change the default search criteria by clicking the "Refine Search Criteria" option visible under the Any Text and Title fields. There are three ways to refine the search option:






- With all the words
- With at least one of the words
- Without the words


Once you are happy with your search terms, select the Search button or press the Return key on your keyboard to carry out your search.

The results which we've returned is everything in the catalogue with "menin gate" in the Title field, but only those records with digitised content. Among the records returned are some architectural plans and drawings of the Menin Gate and some First World War enquiry files for some of the casualties who are commemorated on the Menin Gate.

Advanced Search >
Search Results

[Refine Search](#) All ▾

Unique ID	Title	Description	Date	File Number	Thumbnail
CWGC/7/3/1/1/M60/1	Plan, Elevations and Sections - Menin Gate	Plans, elevations and sections of the Ypres (Menin gate) Memorial, including plan and section of loggia, and section through stairs and side elevation.	c. 1922	M60-001	
CWGC/7/3/1/1/M60/2	Design for Memorial to the Missing - The Menin Gate, Ypres - Details One Eighth Inch to One Foot	Plans, elevations and sections of the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial, including elevation showing parapet wall of stairs, half plan of springing of vault, half plan above roof, and section through rampart showing side elevation of building and causeway.	1/4/1922 - 30/4/1922	M60-002	
CWGC/7/3/1/1/M60/5	The Menin Gate - Details of Upper Part of Archway E. Side and Lion - as revised - Half Inch Scale.	Elevations (blueprint) of the upper archway and lion sculpture at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial.	1/3/1924 - 31/3/1924	M60-005	
CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/5	Lance Corporal CLAUDE JOHN MCLEAN FIELD - YPRES (MENIN GATE) MEMORIAL - Australian Infantry, A.I.F.	File of correspondence concerning the illegibility of names on the Menin Gate Memorial, including that of Lance Corporal Field's.	29/10/1962 - 2/5/1963	AA1118	
CWGC/8/1/4/1/1/22	Lieutenant JAMES	Correspondence	16/09/1918	AA10103	




Historic Archive Part 2 - Work of the Commission in Connection with Second World War Deaths

Useful Links

- [CWGC Main Site](#)
- [CWGC Online Exhibition](#)
- [Discovery, the National Archives catalogue](#)
- [The Imperial War Museum Collections](#)
- [The National Army Museum](#)
- [The Royal Air Force Museum](#)
- [The Royal Navy Loss List](#)

Tweets by @CWGC

CommonwealthWarGraves Retweeted

 **MAParis** @MAParis14

Me voilà: spending another memorable day in the company of those who (to paraphrase) "for our tomorrow, gave their today" at the fabulous @CWGC Cemetery at @villeetaples. A 🇫🇷

Step 2: Explore archive material

Below is an overview of the other types of records you will expect to find on the catalogue and the type of information they can provide about the Commission's cemetery and memorial sites:

Annual Reports (CWGC/2/1)

What are they?

Annual reports of the Commission. Contents of each report generally include a list of the current Commissioners, a review of the work undertaken in the preceding year, an account of the finances of the Commission, and a statistical analysis of the number of cemeteries, memorials, graves, and commemorations maintained by the Commission. The reports may also contain information covering the final construction date of cemeteries and memorials and are often illustrated with images of sites.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

The Annual Reports cover a specific period of the Commission's work and they record the constructional progress in each Area/Region where the Commission is responsible, but also other details such as unveilings, major maintenance projects, and any other significant events occurring at a Commission site.

Are they available to access online?

All of the Commission's Annual Reports from 1919 to 2015 are available to access via the online catalogue in PDF format.

Architectural plans and drawings (CWGC/7/3/1)

What are they?

Architectural plans and drawings of CWGC cemeteries, memorials and cemetery plots. The drawings may include plans and elevations of sites, details of horticultural planting, and drawings of specific architectural features.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

As well as showing the architectural features and details of a particular site, the signature and dates on the drawings are useful for understanding who was responsible for the design or when a later amendment or additional feature was incorporated at the site.

Are they available to access online?

Some of the architectural plans have been digitised and are available to access on the archive catalogue.

Cemetery design approval documents/Form A's

What are they?

For some First World War cemetery sites in France and Belgium, there are files containing a number of documents which were submitted for approval by the Principal Architect or Assistant Architect to the Commission's Financial Adviser, the Land and Legal Adviser, Principal Architect (if Assistant Architect had been responsible for the design), the Botanical Adviser and finally the Commission's Artistic Adviser Sir Frederic Kenyon.

For Second World War sites, these types of documents are covered in a series of files which are referred to as Form A's and were used in the same way as the cemetery design approval documents for the First World War.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

These are important records as they record the original specifications of a design and remarks from senior Commission staff, including any modifications suggested for the design.

Are they available to access online?

All of the cemetery design approval documents and Form A's have been digitised and are available to access online.

Commission meeting minutes (CWGC/2/2)

What are they?

Minutes of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and predecessor/related organisations, including minutes of the Imperial War Graves Commission (1917-1960) and the Prince of Wales' National Committee for the Care of Soldiers Graves (1916-1917). The Commission Meeting Minutes record the discussions and decisions made by the appointed Commissioners regarding the policies and work of the Commission.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

In terms of cemeteries and memorials, the minutes record discussions covering a wide range of topics including the selection, design, and construction (including any modifications) of a site, as well as any ceremonies or events taking place at a site. Members of the Commission's staff may also report on a specific site, area, or region at a Commission meeting after a visit and provide details about the condition of cemeteries and memorials.

Are they available to access online?

All the Commission's meeting minutes between 1916 and 2013 have been catalogued and digitised. The downloadable document is the final version of the Committee Meeting minutes. Additional information, including the verbatim minutes and subsidiary reports, may be available in the physical file.

Finance Committee meeting minutes (CWGC/4/2)

What are they?

The Finance Meeting Minutes record all financial aspects and costs incurred by the Commission during its work, including costs for cemetery and memorial construction, headstone production costs/contracts, and staff costs.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

Mostly concerned with financial business, the minutes only mention aspects like employment, remuneration or staff expenses, however, there may be other details mentioned in connection with specific Commission staff.

Are they available to access online?

The Finance Committee meeting minutes have been catalogued, but they have not been digitised yet.

Photographic Collection (CWGC/9)

What is it?

Collection of photographic prints and negatives from the Commission's Photographic Library. Subject matter includes photographs of cemetery and memorial sites, Commission staff, and ceremonial events.

What can the photographic collection tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

Some photograph albums such as the Goodland collection depict the earliest views of a cemetery, including prior to or during construction, so there may be images showing the site when there were still wooden crosses erected over the graves.

Other images in the photographic collection show routine maintenance work within a site or special ceremonies or events, such as unveilings. The Negative Collection (CWGC/9/1/1) for example, covers a extensive period between 1920 and 1980; a significant part of the Commission's history and the images which comprise this collection are really useful for seeing how a cemetery or memorial has developed and changed over time.

Is it available to access online?

The black and white photographic negatives and some photograph albums (such as the Goodland collection) have been digitised and are available to access via the online catalogue, but there may be other images in the collection which can only be viewed on site in the Reading Room.

Tender documents and bills of quantities (CWGC/7/3/3)

What are they?

Statements of work, prices, dimensions, and other details, for the erection and construction of various Commission cemeteries and memorials between 1917 and 1988.

What can they tell us about a Commission cemetery or memorial?

These are useful documents in breaking down the more specific details of the construction of Commission cemeteries and memorials or an individual architectural feature as part of a wider project of work at a Commission site.

Are they available to access online?

The Tender documents and bills of quantities have been catalogued but not digitised, so can only be viewed on site in the Reading Room.



Still can't find what you're
looking for? Please contact
enquiries@cwgc.org
for help