



POELCAPELLE BRITISH CEMETERY

Nowhere were the battlefields more churned and ploughed by shell fire that here at Poelkapelle. When Commonwealth forces reached this area during the 1917 Third Ypres Offensive, the rain and shelling created a near impassable swamp. Those who died were often lost in the mud, and only after the end of the war was it possible to methodically search this area. Thousands of remains were discovered and reburied here, but due to the nature of the fighting and the passage of time, few could be identified. You will therefore find shockingly few individuals named here despite this being one of the largest CWGC cemeteries in the area. Row upon row of headstones bear the haunting inscription chosen by Rudyard Kipling, 'A soldier of the Great War, known unto God'. This vast cemetery is almost devoid of names and has an unusually foreboding characteristic not often felt in CWGC sites. It is a must-visit for anyone wishing to better appreciate an awful reality of the First World War.

Designed by Charles Holden and Wilfred Von Berg, the Stone of Remembrance and the Cross of Sacrifice are grouped together at the bottom of the cemetery facing plot upon plot of ordered headstones.

The cemetery register, plan and visitors' book can be found in the entrance feature.



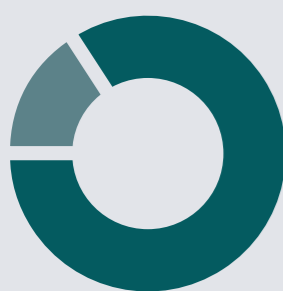
Men attempt to move a gun through the mud and devastation near Poelcapelle, October 1917 © IWM Q 3007



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COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

Total number of graves: **7,479**



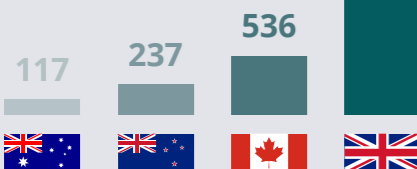
Identified
Unidentified



Force nationalities

- Australian
- New Zealand
- Canadian
- United Kingdom

6,579



For more information please scan here.



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'Ici Poelcapelle' declares the sign, because without it how would one know in the devastated landscape that this was once the village of Poelcapelle. December 1918 © Antony d'Ypres collection, In Flanders Fields Museum





Some Labour Company sergeants relax in post-war Ypres area © IWM Q 100542

THE WAR IS OVER BUT DANGER LINGERS

Amongst the rows of unidentified headstones, you might be surprised when you come across a row of identified servicemen side-by-side in Plot 17 (XVII), Row C. This row encompasses a tragic story. These men of the 48th Labour Company had the unenviable task of clearing the battlefields and burying the dead here at Poelcapelle Cemetery. One cold night in October 1919 the small group gathered round a campfire for warmth. The fire ignited unexploded war-time ordnance in the earth beneath their feet and all seven were killed. They now lie in the cemetery that they worked to create.



1



2



3

HIGHLIGHTS

1 This cemetery is quite overwhelming, and it can be difficult to know where to begin, so head for the Cross of Sacrifice and take in the view of the massed ranks of headstones.

This is a vast cemetery with more than fifty plots of graves. The ordered rows maximize the available space in the site for burials. Architectural touches include an ornate brick arched entrance building, a raised platform for the Cross of Sacrifice and a sunken area for the Stone of Remembrance, both of which are unusually grouped together at the front of the cemetery.

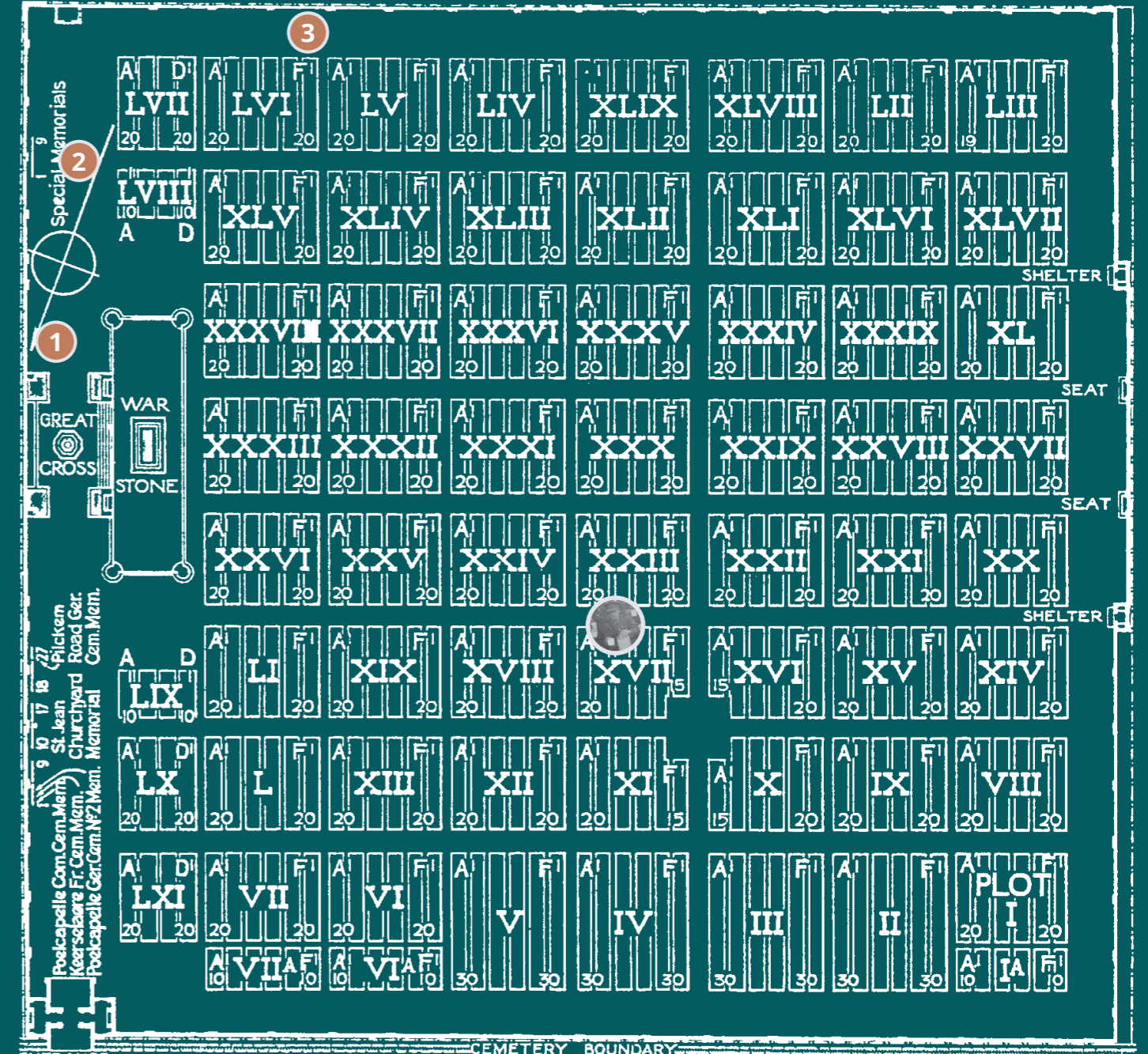
2 Against the back wall of the cemetery, to the left of the Cross of Sacrifice, you will find a headstone that bears a musical tribute.

The inscriptions on CWGC headstones are personal tributes to the fallen provided by loved ones and many are heart-breaking and unique. The inscription on Second Lieutenant Hugh Gordon Langton of the

London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers) is one of the most unusual. Instead of words, his loved ones chose music. It is believed to be a well-known period tune called 'After the Ball is Over' but to this day no one has been able to say for certain.

3 Head into the plots of graves but keep to the left-hand side. Pause at the second plot on the far left hand side of the cemetery.

Buried in Plot 56 (LVI), Row F, Grave 8, is Private John Condon who is one of the youngest casualties commemorated by the CWGC. Born in Waterford, Ireland, he was killed in action on 24 May 1915 while serving with the Royal Irish Regiment at Ypres. He was just 14 years old. Look out for tributes on his grave, as many pilgrims to it leave something. Interestingly, young John Condon is buried beside one of the older servicemen buried in the Salient, 47-year-old Private Thomas Carthy.



ENTRANCE FROM WESTROOSEBEKE ROAD TO POELCAPELLE STATION 2 MILES TO YPRES STATION 7 MILES
SCALE OF FEET

HE LIVES WHILE WE REMEMBER HE DIES IF WE FORGET

Inscription on the headstone of Sergeant William Robertson, LIII. C. 8.

In the area

Close to this cemetery is the town of Poelcapelle. Here one can find the 'Guynemer Paviljoen' where a full-size replica of a French WWI plane can be seen, as well the corresponding visitor centre. On the main road back to Ypres, visitors pass the St Julien Canadian Memorial (the 'brooding soldier').

Step free access

parking space

Seats present in cemetery