



Commonwealth War Graves Commission

CANADA



and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission



Canadian National Memorial, Vimy, France



The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for commemorating members of the armed forces of the Commonwealth who died during the two world wars and for the care of their graves and memorials throughout the world.

Canada is one of six partner governments which make up the Commission, the others being the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India. Newfoundland was a full and equal partner in the Commission until it became Canada's tenth province in 1949, when its status as a separate Dominion ceased.

The cost of the Commission's work is met by the participating countries in proportion to the number of their war graves in the Commission's care, the Canadian contribution being in the region of 10%.

The Role of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commission's work is guided by fundamental principles which were established in 1920:

- that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on a headstone over the grave or by an inscription on a memorial if the grave was unidentified;
- that the headstones and memorials should be permanent;
- that the headstones should be uniform; and
- that there should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed.

The theme of common sacrifice and equal honour in death was reflected in the non-sectarian design of the headstones used throughout the world and in the policy of non-repatriation of remains for members of the Commonwealth forces which resulted in the location of the memorials and cemeteries truly reflecting the scope of both conflicts. The Commission commemorates 1.7 million war dead in 148 countries in over 23,000 burial grounds.

CANADA IN THE

The Land Forces at the Western Front

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 the automatic participation of Canada and Newfoundland in the First World War was virtually unquestioned and, in the four years that followed, the Canadians and Newfoundlanders built reputations as warriors which were second to none. The impact of the battles they took part in is seen today in the street names and cenotaph inscriptions in virtually every Canadian town or city - Cambrai, Passchendale, Somme, Courcellette, Mount Sorrel, Arras, Amiens - and a host of other battle honours.



The Commission's Head Office is located in the United Kingdom. Normal day to day operations are the responsibility of the Director-General while the Commission's members meet quarterly to approve corporate plans and review progress of work. Canada is represented on the Commission by its High Commissioner resident in London.

The Commission's responsibilities are executed through geographically organized Areas or Agencies. All ensure that war graves in their care receive due attention and there is a solid management cycle in place which allocates and expends the funds granted to the Commission by the participating governments.

The War Dead of Canada

The 110,000 war dead of Canada are commemorated in 75 countries around the world. Outside Canada, the countries in which the largest numbers of Canadian war dead are commemorated are France (47,500), Belgium (15,800), the United Kingdom (12,700), Italy (5,700) and the Netherlands (5,700).

It is, of course, impossible to mention all of the cemeteries in which they lie or the memorials on which they are named but a selection is given in the following narratives summarising Canada's contribution in the two world wars.

FIRST WORLD WAR

In January 1915, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry became the first Canadian battalion to see action on the Western Front. By March, the 1st Canadian Division, mobilised at the outbreak of war, was in France at the Battle of Neuve-Chapelle and in April it took part in the 2nd Battle of Ypres in Belgium. Joined later in September by a 2nd Division, and in August 1916 by a 3rd and a 4th Division, the Canadian Corps fought valiantly on the Western Front to the end of the war.

The Canadian Memorial, St Juliaan, Belgium





Menin Gate Memorial, Ypres, Belgium

The Ypres Salient

Canadians lie buried in many of the hundreds of cemeteries crowded into the old Ypres Salient area; half of the graves in **Ridge Wood Military Cemetery**, an old front-line burial ground, are Canadian as are those in **Maple Copse Cemetery**, which lay right at the heart of the Mount Sorrel battlefield. Many of the Canadians killed in the 3rd Battle of Ypres are buried in **Passchendaele New Military Cemetery** and in **Tyne Cot Cemetery**. In both cases, well over half of them are unidentified. **Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery**, at the centre of a collection of casualty clearing stations, has the greatest concentration of Canadian graves in the area with more than 1,000. Of the 43 graves in **Quievrain Communal Cemetery**, 35 are Canadian, all dating from the very last days of the war. The **Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial** commemorates 54,000 men who died in the Salient and have no known grave. Almost 7,000 of them were Canadian.

The Somme

Fresh from a reorganisation in Egypt after four months in Gallipoli, the Newfoundland Regiment (later Royal Newfoundland Regiment) arrived in France in time for the 1916 Allied offensive on the Somme. The first day of the battle, 1 July, saw the regiment virtually annihilated at Beaumont-Hamel, where their terrible loss is remembered by the **Beaumont-Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial**.

Tyne Cot Cemetery, Belgium

The Canadian Corps arrived on the Somme in August 1916 and in the following months played significant roles in the actions at Courcellette and Pozieres. The fighting left many Canadian graves, a large number of them unidentified, in **Courcellette British Cemetery**, and in **Adanac Military Cemetery**, **Miraumont**, the latter built up around a single existing grave after the Armistice when the battlefields were cleared. **Regina Trench Cemetery**, **Grandcourt**, was named after a German earthwork much fought over by the Canadians in October and November 1916. The **2nd Canadian Cemetery**, **Sunken Road**, **Contalmaison**, contains just 44 graves, all from the 2nd Canadian Infantry Battalion.



National Archives of Canada

Vimy

Perhaps Canada's most famous battle, which many assert helped to forge a distinct sense of Canadian identity, began on Easter Monday, 9 April 1917. The Canadian Corps successfully captured this strongly held feature during the opening stages of the Battle of Arras and in France the greatest concentration of cemeteries with Canadian interest is centred on Vimy. **Villers Station Cemetery**, **Villers-au-Bois**, had close associations with the nearby Canadian Corps headquarters and contains many graves from April 1917. The artillery of the 2nd Canadian Division had their headquarters near **La Targette British Cemetery**, **Neuville-St Vaast**, where almost a third of the burials have an artillery connection.

The Canadian Corps took the village of Thelus on 9 April 1917. **Thelus Military Cemetery** was begun immediately afterwards with one large grave in what is now Plot II and in nearby **Nine Elms Military Cemetery**

eighty men of the 14th Bn Canadian Infantry are buried together in Plot I Row A. Givenchy was taken by the 2nd Canadian Division on 13 April 1917 and some of their dead are buried in **Givenchy-en-Gohelle** and **Givenchy Road Canadian Cemeteries**. The latter is exclusively Canadian.

At the foot of Vimy Ridge, **La Chaudiere Military Cemetery**, originally known as Vimy Canadian Cemetery No 1, was greatly enlarged when the Vimy battlefields were cleared after the Armistice, as was **Canadian Cemetery No 2, Neuville-St Vaast**. Much smaller, **Petit-Vimy British Cemetery** was a front-line cemetery in 1917; all but four of the 94 burials it contains are Canadian.

After the war, Vimy was chosen as the site for the **Canadian National Memorial** which remembers all Canadians who served their country in battle during the First World War, and particularly the 54,000 who gave their lives in France and Belgium. It also bears the names of 11,000 Canadian servicemen who died in France who have no known grave.



*On 25 May 2000, the remains of an unidentified Canadian soldier were exhumed by staff of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission from **Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez** and entrusted to Canada at a ceremony held at the Vimy Memorial. The remains were returned to Canada and laid to rest at the foot of the National War Memorial in Ottawa in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.*



Halifax Memorial, Canada

The Final Days

The Canadians fought over the Arras battlefields again in the autumn of 1918 during the final stages of the Allied advance to victory, the Last Hundred Days, and the cemeteries from this period of movement are small with a distinct identity. Many French Canadians of the 22nd and 24th Infantry Battalions are buried at **Quebec Cemetery** while **Ontario Cemetery**, **Sains-les-Marquain**, contains many graves from battalions raised in Ontario. Most of the graves in **Niagara Cemetery**, **Iwuy**, date from a single day in mid-October. Unsurprisingly, all but ten of the 265 graves in **Canada Cemetery**, **Tilloy-les-Cambrai**, are Canadian.

In the Air

It was as members of the Royal Flying Corps, the Royal Naval Air Service and, from April 1918, the Royal Air Force that Canada made its contribution to the war in the air. Over 23,000 Canadians served in the various components of this new, hazardous, method of modern warfare earning a great number of decorations and awards for valour. One third of all Canadian pilots died in combat, almost 1,600.

Those Canadian airmen killed on the Western Front whose graves are not known are commemorated by name on the **Arras Flying Services Memorial**.



At Sea

Canadian Naval participation in the First World War was limited. When war broke out the Royal Canadian Navy possessed only two old cruisers which saw active service conducting patrols. Fleets of trawlers and small craft carried out minesweeping and anti-submarine operations in coastal waters and by the end of the war the navy had built up a force of over 100 coastal anti-submarine and minesweeping vessels which protected convoys as they sailed to Britain. In addition over 3,000 members of the Royal Canadian Navy served in British ships in European waters while an unrecorded number of Canadians and Newfoundlanders enlisted directly into the Royal Navy.

Many of the seamen lost while serving with the Canadian naval services are among those commemorated on the **Halifax Memorial**, Nova Scotia, and the **Victoria Memorial**, British Columbia, Canada. The latter includes most of those lost in the sinking of HMCS Galiano in October 1918. Men of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve and Mercantile Marine are among those remembered on the **Beaumont-Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial** in France.

The Cost to Canada

From the Western Front to Russia, from the garrisons of Bermuda and St. Lucia to the hospitals and engineering units of the Middle East, hundreds of thousands of Canadians and Newfoundlanders served throughout the First World War; almost 65,000 did not return.

*Top to bottom: Nine Elms Military Cemetery, France,
Tilloy-les-Cambrai Cemetery, France,
Maple Copse Cemetery, Belgium and
Quievrain Communal Cemetery, Belgium*

Left: Beaumont Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial, France



CANADA IN THE

The Land Campaigns

When hostilities broke out in September 1939 Canada declared war and its citizens and those of Newfoundland rushed to serve. By December the first contingent of Canadians had arrived in the United Kingdom to begin training for their part in the Allied victory that would not come for almost six years.

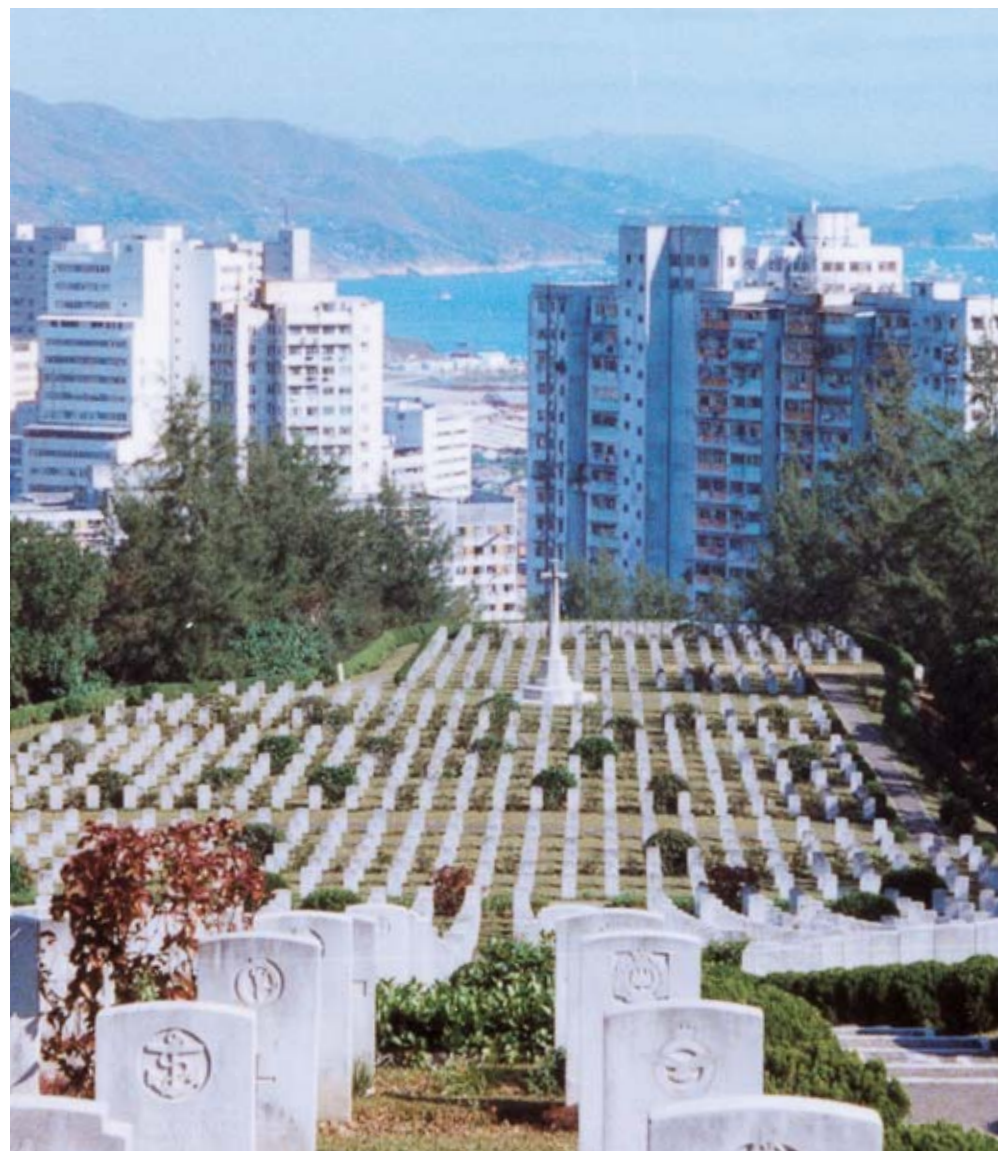


Dieppe, the aftermath: Stunned Germans and Canadian prisoners survey the devastation on the beach

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Hong Kong

In late 1941 Canadian troops sailed for Hong Kong, destined to become the first Canadian ground units to fight in the Second World War. When Hong Kong surrendered on 25 December 1941 some 290 Canadians had been killed and a further 490 wounded. Those taken prisoner endured brutal treatment and near starvation. More than 550 of the original 1,975 who landed in Hong Kong died and the majority of them are commemorated in Hong Kong at **Sai Wan War Cemetery** and **Memorial**.

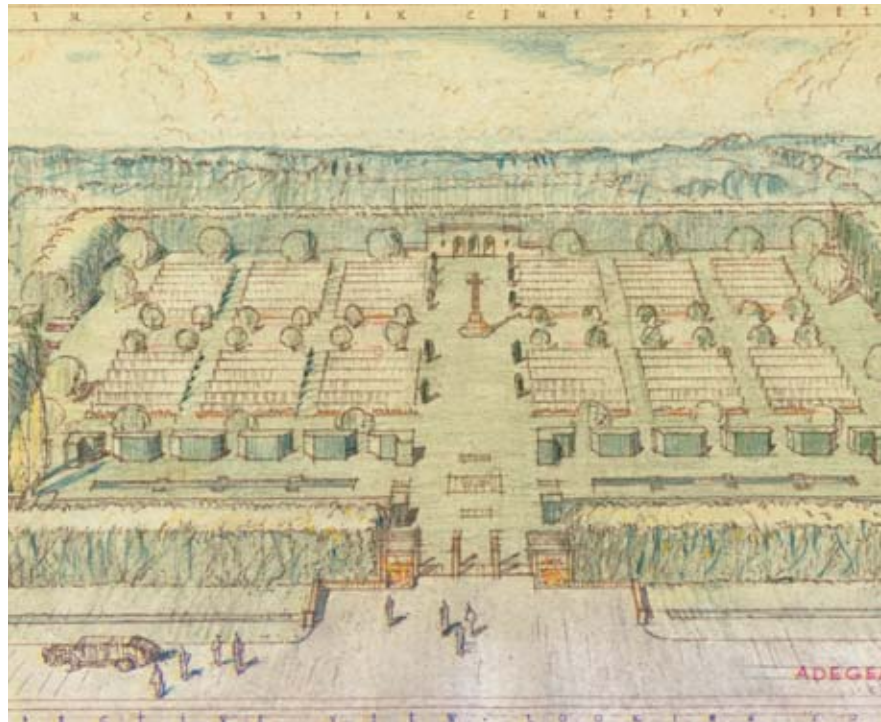


Sai Wan War Cemetery, Hong Kong

SECOND WORLD WAR

The Dieppe Raid

The Canadian Army's activities in Europe started with a long period of training in the United Kingdom with their first trial coming in the Dieppe Raid of 19 August 1942. Critics continue to debate the value of the raid which cost Canada dearly - 3,370 casualties including 970 killed and almost 2,000 taken prisoner - but most agree that the lessons learned were invaluable in the planning of the eventual invasion of the continent on D-Day 1944. Many of those who died in the raid are buried in France at **Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery** or at **St Sever Cemetery Extension, Rouen**, where some of the wounded were taken. Other wounded were evacuated to the United Kingdom and those who died were buried in the large Canadian plot at **Brookwood Military Cemetery**.



Adegem Canadian War Cemetery, Belgium



Italy

In July 1943 the Canadians joined the Allied landings in Sicily as a prelude to the invasion of Italy. Agira, taken by the 1st Canadian Division, was later chosen as the site for the burial of the vast majority of Canadians killed in the Sicilian campaign. All 490 graves in **Agira Canadian War Cemetery** are Canadian.

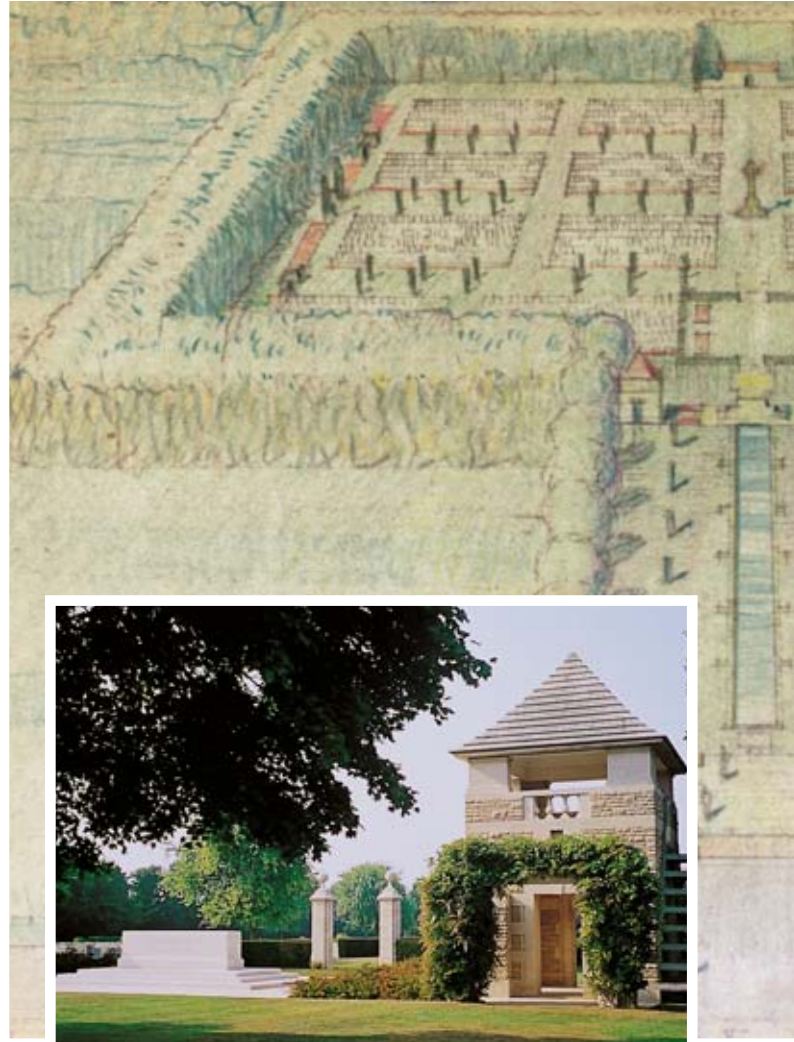
In September the Allies invaded mainland Italy and Canadian forces were heavily involved in the fiercely fought campaign that drove the Germans north. In December 1943 the 1st Canadian Division suffered heavy losses in the fighting at Moro River and Ortona, leaving almost 1,400 of their dead in **Moro River Canadian War Cemetery**. Most of the 850 Canadian graves in **Cassino War Cemetery** date from May 1944 and some of the most intense fighting of the campaign. Significant numbers of Canadian graves will also be found further north in such Commonwealth cemeteries as **Montecchio, Cesena, Ravenna** and **Villanova**.

Agira Canadian War Cemetery, Italy

Normandy and Beyond

In February 1945 Canadian troops in Italy were moved to north-west Europe to fight alongside other Canadians already engaged in the liberation of France and the Low Countries, a campaign which had begun on D-Day, 6 June 1944. Landing at Juno Beach in Normandy, the Canadians then pushed south through Caen and Falaise. Almost 5,000 Canadian dead from the campaign lie in **Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery** and **Bretteville-sur-Laize Canadian War Cemetery**, and more than 250 whose graves are not known are commemorated on the **Bayeux Memorial**.

Following the break-out from Normandy, the First Canadian Army was given the task of clearing the coastal ports of France, Belgium and the Netherlands before finally advancing into Germany. The 600 Canadian burials in **Calais Canadian War Cemetery** relate to the liberation of the town in September 1944. Most of those who died as the front swept through Belgium are buried in **Adegem Canadian War Cemetery** and in the Netherlands, there are substantial Canadian cemeteries at **Bergen-op-Zoom**, **Holten** and **Groesbeek**.

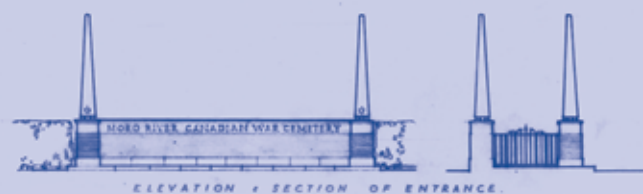


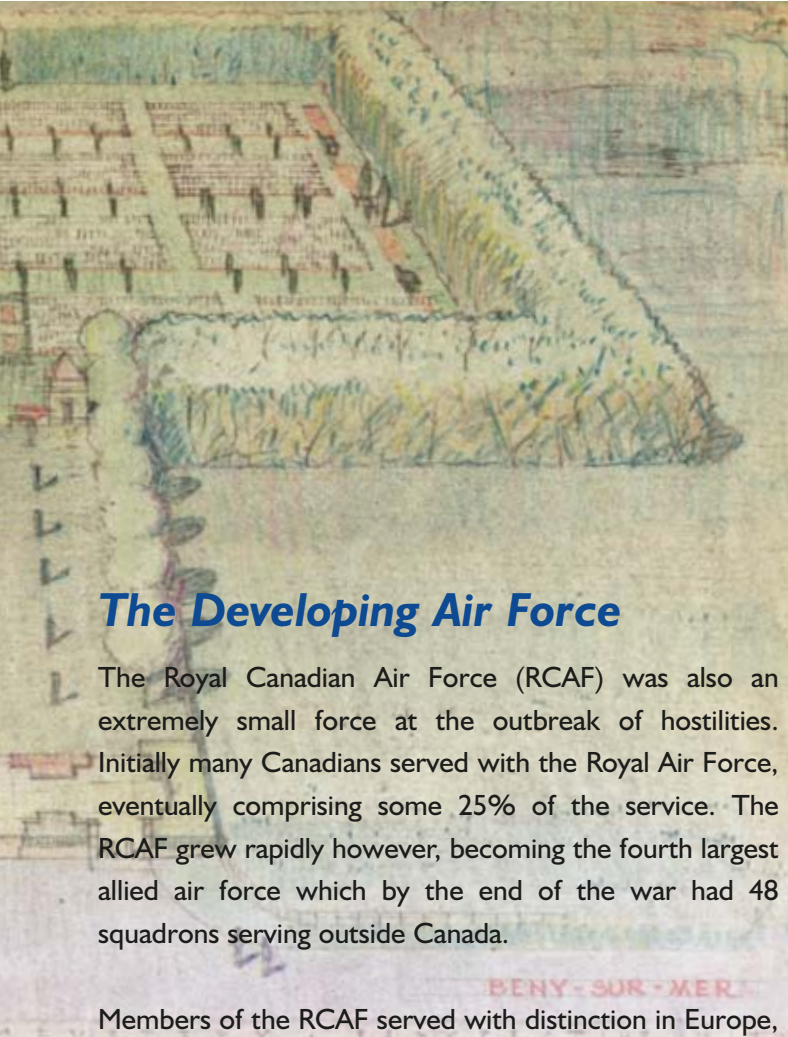
Beny-sur-Mer Canadian War Cemetery, France

The Growing Role at Sea

The Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) expanded from a force of 2,000 men in 1939 to nearly 100,000 by the war's end. From six ships it grew to a force of nearly 400, the third largest navy in the world. Their main duty was to act as convoy escorts in the Atlantic, the Mediterranean and to Murmansk, Russia. They rendered invaluable service in the Battle of the Atlantic against the German U-Boats and supported the landings in the Sicilian, Italian and Normandy campaigns. In actions ranging over most of the world's seas the RCN lost more than 2,000 officers and men. Canada's Merchant Navy also served with distinction as they plied the Atlantic on treacherous supply convoys suffering losses of more than 1,300.

Those members of the Canadian naval services who have no known grave are commemorated on the **Halifax Memorial**.





The Developing Air Force

The Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) was also an extremely small force at the outbreak of hostilities. Initially many Canadians served with the Royal Air Force, eventually comprising some 25% of the service. The RCAF grew rapidly however, becoming the fourth largest allied air force which by the end of the war had 48 squadrons serving outside Canada.

Members of the RCAF served with distinction in Europe, North Africa, the Mediterranean, India and the Far East. There was also considerable activity on the Home Front patrolling Canada's vast coastline and conducting training for Commonwealth Air Forces under the umbrella of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. But it was perhaps with Bomber Command that her largest contribution was made with the RCAF forming No 6 Bomber Group and flying countless missions over Germany. The Honour Roll of the RCAF lists 17,000 names of whom 14,500 died overseas, the majority with Bomber Command.

More than 3,000 Canadian airmen who died in the air war over north-west Europe and have no known grave are commemorated on the **Air Forces Memorial, Runnymede**, in the United Kingdom. Airmen missing in other theatres are commemorated on memorials at **El Alamein, Malta, Singapore** and **Ottawa**. Many of the Canadian airmen killed in bombing raids over Germany are buried in the war cemeteries at **Reichswald Forest** and **Rheinberg**, near the Dutch border, **Berlin**, and **Durnbach** near Munich. No 6 Bomber Group had its headquarters in Harrogate in the United Kingdom and the air forces section at **Harrogate (Stonefall) Cemetery** contains the graves of 700 Canadian airmen.



MOD/ Air Historical Branch: Canadian Airmen stationed in the United Kingdom

Commonwealth War Graves in Canada and the United States

There are over 19,000 Commonwealth war dead commemorated in almost 3,300 cemeteries in North America and on three principal Memorials to the Missing. The majority of those buried in North America died as a result of disease or accident, or of wounds received on active service elsewhere. Many others died in air or naval operations and were denied a known grave.

Services Available to the Public

Locations

Records are kept at the Commission's Head Office in the United Kingdom and at the Canadian Agency which enable the staff to help enquirers locate a particular grave or a name on a memorial.

Directions to Visitors

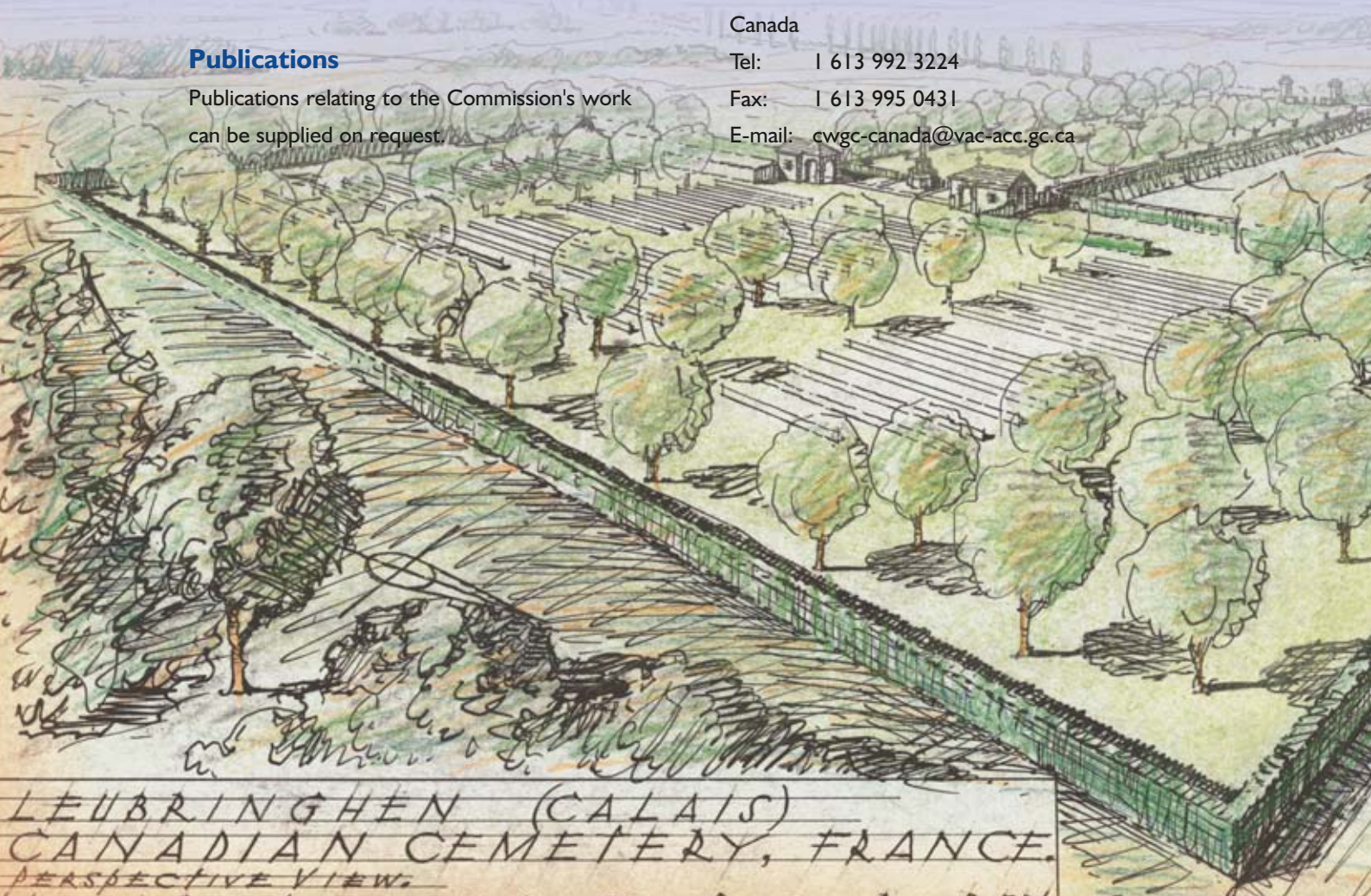
The Commission can provide directions to all Commonwealth war cemeteries and memorials throughout the world, or enquirers can find out for themselves from the Commission's web site at www.cwgc.org

Publications

Publications relating to the Commission's work can be supplied on request.

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LEUBRINGHEN (CALAIS)
CANADIAN CEMETERY, FRANCE.
PERSPECTIVE VIEW.