

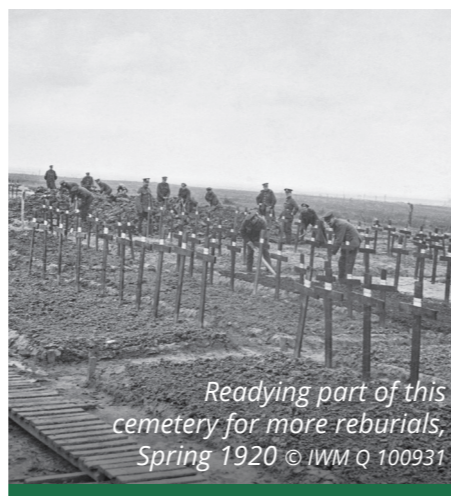


PASSCHENDAELE NEW BRITISH CEMETERY

Passchendaele...just the word is enough to conjure up images of desolation and death. The battles for Passchendaele village in late 1917 were horrific and traumatic for the tens of thousands of soldiers who fought here. Standing in the cemetery today, you can look across the fields that were churned by artillery and see the spire of the rebuilt Passchendaele church. After weeks of fighting in the rain and mud Canadian soldiers finally captured the smashed ruins of the village on 6 November 1917. It was perhaps Canada's greatest achievement of the war, and while there was no glorious final advance, the heroic determination of Canadian soldiers in the worst possible conditions led, finally, to victory.

There are many ghosts on this part of the battlefield. Those who died were often lost forever in the shattered landscape. After the war the area was carefully searched, and this cemetery was begun. You will find many Canadians here, their headstones marked with the maple leaf badge. The cemetery itself was designed by Charles Holden and Wilfred Von Berg. The imposing entrance building is reminiscent of the German block houses which were desperately fought over in this area. Inside there are three carefully stepped levels which integrate the cemetery into the gently falling terrain.

The cemetery register, plan and visitors' book can be found in the shelter building at the front of the cemetery.



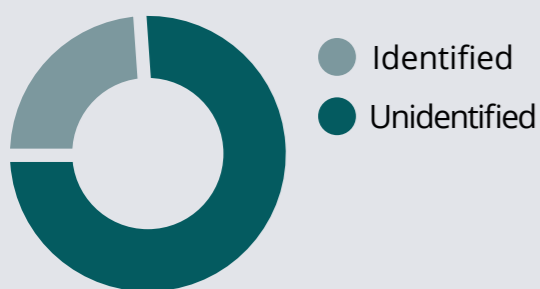
Readying part of this cemetery for more reburials, Spring 1920 © IWM Q 100931



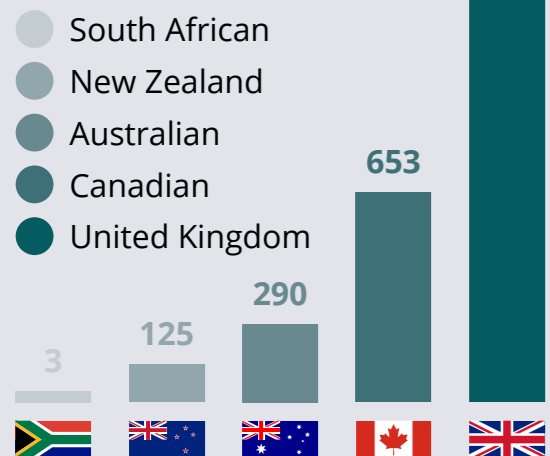
PASSCHENDAELE NEW BRITISH CEMETERY

COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES

Total number of graves: **2,101**



Force nationalities



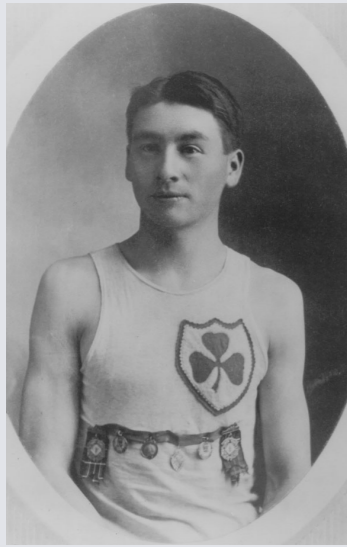
For more information please scan here.



V.U. Nathalie Dumon, CWGC Elverdingestraat 82, 8900 Ieper - Cover Jan D'Hondt Ateljé D

1917: Aerial photographs of Passchendaele before and after the 1917 battles show the devastation wrought © IWM Q 42918A





PRIVATE ALEX WUTTUNEE DECOTEAU

Private Alex Wuttunee Decoteau was a remarkable individual. A member of the Red Pheasant Cree First Nation, in 1911 he became the first indigenous police officer in Canada. He was also a highly talented athlete, representing Canada in the 5,000 meters event in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. In 1916 he volunteered to serve with Canadian forces and was sent to Europe. During an athletic event on Salisbury plain, King George V awarded him his gold pocket watch as a reward for winning a race. Alex carried the watch with him to the Western Front, arriving in May 1917. In the early hours of 30 October 1917, Alex was with his comrades just down the road from Passchendaele New British Cemetery when he was shot and killed by a sniper. He was laid to rest here in Plot XI, Row A, Grave 28. In 1985, a ceremony was performed in his hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, to 'bring his spirit home'.

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NZ soldiers near here, October 1917 © National Library of NZ

2



© Pieter van Elteren

3



HIGHLIGHTS

- 1 Before entering the cemetery pause to take in the view.

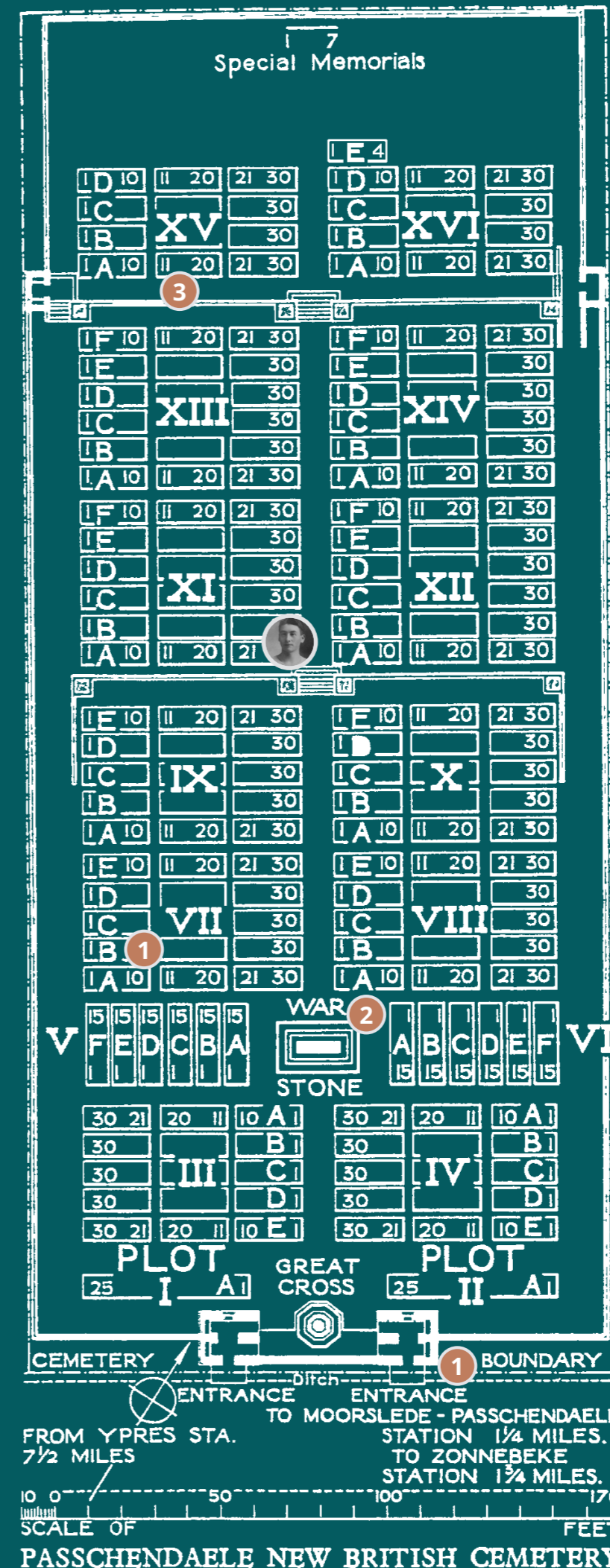
The rebuilt Passchendaele church can be seen on the high ground nearby. During October and November 1917 the surrounding fields were the scene of terrible fighting. The fields rise and fall here; the lower ground became impassable swamps which forced the attacking Commonwealth troops into killing zones along the drier high ground.

While this area is closely associated with Canadian forces, buried here are hundreds of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who fought and died nearby. On a single day in October 1917, over 500 New Zealand soldiers were killed in an unsuccessful assault on the Bellevue Spur, upon which the cemetery now stands. Remembered as New Zealand's darkest day, you will find many headstones here which bear the date 12 October 1917.

- 2 Head into the cemetery. The plots of graves in the top section of the cemetery surround the Stone of Remembrance with the headstones facing the Stone like a silent congregation.

- 3 Walk past the Stone of Remembrance and head down into the lower sections.

Many who survived the First World War felt that this must be the last war humanity would ever fight. Never again would we let this happen. Tragically, we know this not to be true. Private Emanuel Fulton of the Canadian Infantry was killed in the final fight for Passchendaele on 6 November 1917. His death was keenly felt by his parents who chose an interesting inscription for his headstone: 'I have given my life to promote peace between all nations'. His grave can be found in the left-hand plot at the very bottom of the cemetery, Plot XV, Row A.



THEN
THOUGHT
I TO
UNDERSTAND
THIS BUT
IT WAS
TOO HARD
FOR ME

Inscription on the headstone
of Private Thomas Little,
XII. C. 9.

In the area
Nearby is the New Zealand Memorial at 's Gravenstafel Spur & Passchendaele New British Cemetery. In the town of Passendale itself one can find the Passchendaele Canadian Memorial (Crest Farm).

Westtoer bike routes nearby

- The Legacy
- Frontroute 14-18
- Vive le Vélo fietsroute - Paars
- Grenzeloze Goesting

Step free access

Parking space

No seats present in cemetery