



### CWGC GRAVESTONES

There was much discussion - and argument- as to the type of permanent marker that individual British graves should have. The decision was made not to have a cross, but a standard sized headstone for every soldier, representing equality in death whatever a man's rank or religion. The erection of private crosses or memorials was banned, although a few remain that had already been erected. The result of the policy for the visitor is threefold - a readily recognised headstone, a pleasing and regular appearance of cemeteries and space on the headstone for more information to be displayed than on a cross. Information on the headstone generally consists of a regimental badge and name, rank and serial number of the individual. His age may also appear, where provided by the family. There is also a Christian cross, which for Jews is replaced by the Star of David. Where a family did not want a cross then nothing is displayed. The standard cross is replaced by the Victoria Cross or the George Cross for those recipients. Relatives were also allowed to choose a personal inscription; not to exceed sixty-six letters and spaces. There was a charge for an inscription which it was thought would give families a more personal stake in the grave. The charge was 3½d per letter with a maximum charge of £1. Some of these epitaphs can be quite moving.



New Zealand did not allow personal inscriptions and the Canadians would not allow families to be charged so the government paid. The gravestones were generally made from Portland stone, though some used the local stone. Replacements now are in Italian marble as it is more durable. Large numbers of bodies could not be identified and are simply marked "A Soldier of the Great War" and below it "Known Unto God", the latter phrase being contributed by Rudyard Kipling. In contrast the French and Germans chose to bury their unidentified in mass graves, which the Germans called Kameradengraber (comrades graves).

### BATTLEFIELD CEMETERIES

World War 1 Battlefield cemeteries each have their individual appeal and style mostly attributed to the CWGC architect who designed and re-ordered them in the 1920s.

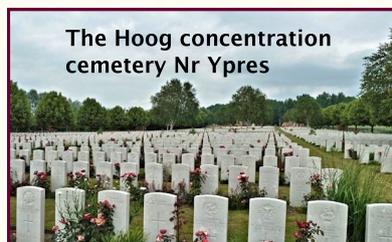
Battlefield cemeteries are generally quite small and created by the soldiers burying their dead from a particular battle or conflict. They are located at the site of the battle and may be quite remote from the road. A few remain on the Somme around Beaumont-Hamel.

Comrades cemeteries are to be found a few hundred yards to the rear of the front line trenches. Often located along a farm track or country lane and associated with a forward Dressing Station. The men buried are those killed during tours of duty in the trenches and it is easy to imagine groups of soldiers burying their comrade who had been killed or injured by shell fire or a sniper.

Communal cemeteries are small plots alongside or within the local French Commune cemetery. These are often the earliest burials in a sector, when the soldiers chose the local cemetery to bury their dead.

Medical Unit cemeteries were formed to the rear of the front lines where main dressing stations and hospitals were established. They may have remained static for many years and so these cemeteries are quite large and notable for the variety of regimental badges that are seen on the carefully laid out rows of graves.

Concentration cemeteries are by far the largest seen on the battlefields, Tyne Cot being the largest with 3587 burials. Always located near a road for ease of visitors, these large cemeteries were created when the battlefields were cleared after the war. They consist of a great number of bodies recovered from the battlefields and relocations from smaller cemeteries. They are



The Hoog concentration cemetery Nr Ypres

typified by their variety of regimental badges in neat rows and immaculate gardens.

Within the smaller cemeteries you may come across spaces in the ranks, or empty plots. These normally occur where a burial has been relocated.

After the war the Americans moved their dead to dedicated cemeteries and the French may have taken their relatives home for re-burial and on the Somme all German burials were concentrated on their own cemeteries.

## OTHER COUNTRY HEADSTONES

Other countries chose different styles of headstone, the USA and France use a white stone cross and Germany a black cross.



White French crosses with a Muslim headstone

The material used for the German cross varies, sometimes iron, sometimes wood or stone. The German military cemetery at Fricourt is the resting place for 17,027 German First World War soldiers. They died on the Somme battlefields over the four years of the Great War. Each cross is centred on the resting place of four soldiers, though German Jewish soldiers (WW1) have individual headstones.



American white crosses at Brookwood cemetery



## CWGC HEADSTONE VARIETIES

There are great variety of CWGC headstones used in their cemeteries. Here are some of the variations of CWGC headstone.



These at Brookwood Cemetery are two German airmen of WW2. Note the angled top to the stones.

Headstones that are placed in groups and/or close to each other or sometimes more than one name on a headstone normally indicate that the remains of the soldiers or airmen could not be separated and so they are buried in a common grave.



The local sandstone is used at this communal graveyard extension.



Clipped corners indicate a non-combatant or non-war death



Poland



Czech



Netherlands



Belgium



French headstones from WW1