



# CANADA REMEMBERS GUIDE

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## Finding Canadians ...

I created the Canada Remembers Guide website because I wanted to help fellow Canadians find our WW1 and WW2 cemeteries and memorials in France and Belgium.

I am not an historian; just a proud Canadian who is passionate about remembrance. As a kid listening to recitations of “*In Flanders Fields*” on Remembrance Day and attending commemoration ceremonies, I was *aware* that Canadians had made sacrifices in both world wars, but it wasn’t until I saw a war cemetery in Europe for the first time that I truly *understood*.



I was 23 years old and I was in France for a wedding of friends I had met while studying abroad two years earlier. Back then, the parents of a friend told me Canadians had liberated their town. I wanted to understand more, so, when I returned for the wedding, I added a week so that I could get to Dieppe and Juno beaches. Walking through lonely rows of headstones, all engraved with a maple leaf and the name and age of all those young men – most of whom I had already outlived – was sobering.

I returned many other times with friends and family over the years to explore the WW2 landing beaches and museums and, then, while living in Belgium for a few years in the mid-2000s, I learned more about our role in WW1, as well.

I saw the poppies growing in the fields of the Flanders region and I walked “between the crosses, row on row”. My old maps, notes and photos from visits made during those years to museums, memorials and cemeteries with everyone who came over to visit us were helpful in putting together the ideas for this website, but I knew I had to go back over there and measure the times and distances between the various sites.



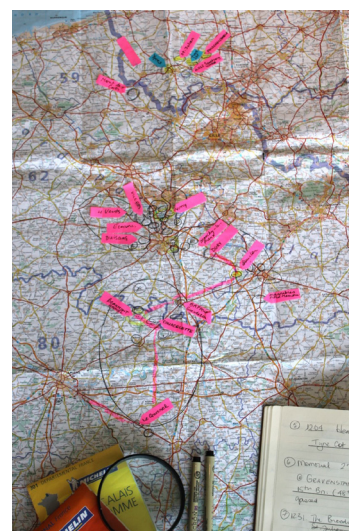
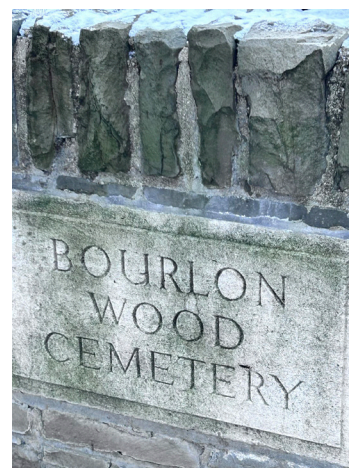
In January 2024, I laid a total of 60 flags at Canadian tombstones in 38 WW1 cemeteries and four WW2 Canadian cemeteries in France and Belgium. At each cemetery, I recorded the number of Canadian burials. I also stopped at more than a dozen Canadian, Newfoundland and regimental memorial sites. ***Here are a few things I learned along the way – I hope it helps you on your trip.***

To prepare for this research trip, I began by making a list of what I thought of as “all” the Canadian cemeteries which, it turns out, was naïve. There are WW1 cemeteries with “Canadian” or “Canada” in the names but, in addition, there are thousands of Canadians laid to rest in cemeteries that are called “Commonwealth” or “British” or “Military” or ... simply “Bourlon Wood”.

I turned to Canada’s Veterans Affairs website, which lists Canadian and (Dominion of) Newfoundland memorials in Northern France and Belgium that are associated with WW1 in the section about memorials overseas. Each of these memorials is related to and commemorates a major WW1 battle in which Canadians played a major role.

These victories came at a very high price. The areas around these battlefields are dotted with military cemeteries. Using my Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) map book of *“Cemeteries & Memorials in Northern France & Belgium”*, Michelin regional maps, and a lot of very magnified searches on Google Maps, I identified cemeteries in which there were likely Canadian soldiers.

For every cemetery I located, I then checked the CWGC website, using a “country of service” filter to comb through thousands of names in the database to count how many Canadians, if any, were at each of the cemeteries I identified. Well, sadly, I found at least one Canadian name – usually hundreds – at every cemetery I checked online.



At WW1 cemeteries with “Canada” or “Canadian” in the name, the burials are either all, or nearly all Canadian casualties. I found them to be relatively small cemeteries located at the site of a battle in which the Canadian troops participated. For example, the **2ND CANADIAN CEMETERY SUNKEN ROAD**, in an open field off a small service road, has only 44 headstones, all of which are Canadian and date from September and October 1916, in the middle of the Battle of the Somme.

Near Cambrai, the **CANTIMPRE CANADIAN CEMETERY** has a total of 225 burials and all but three are Canadian, while at **CANADA CEMETERY TILLOY-LES-CAMBRAI**, 255 of the total 265 burials are Canadians. In a tiny cemetery called **TORONTO CEMETERY** near Démuin, 73 of 97 total burials are Canadian (*there were a lot of signatures in the Visitors Book, which was heartening*). Vimy Memorial Park is the location of **CANADIAN CEMETERY NO.2** and **GIVENCHY ROAD CANADIAN CEMETERY**.



## Commonwealth Cemeteries near Canadian Memorials

Near every Canadian (and Newfoundland) Memorial, there are also many “British”, “Commonwealth”, or “Military” Cemeteries that have Canadian burials. For example, in the vicinity of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial are:

- BOIS CARRÉ BRITISH CEMETERY** (379 Canadian of 502 total),
- NINE ELMS MILITARY CEMETERY** (529 of 683),
- CABARET ROUGE BRITISH CEMETERY** (748 of 7,658),
- ZOUAVE VALLEY CEMETERY** (98 of 244).

Near **LE QUESNEL CANADIAN MEMORIAL** in Marcelcave, France, the tiny and simply named **WOOD CEMETERY** has only 47 headstones, of which 39 bear the maple leaf, identifying them as Canadian soldiers and **HILLSIDE CEMETERY** has a total of 108 burials, of which 98 are Canadian.



The **BOURLON WOOD CEMETERY** with 226 (of 245 total) Canadian burials is a short walk through the woods from the **BOURLON CANADIAN MEMORIAL**. In the town of Dury, not far from the **DURY CANADIAN MEMORIAL** are two Canadian **VICTORIA CROSS** plaques and two cemeteries: **DURY MILL BRITISH CEMETERY** with 324 (of 335 total) Canadian burials and **DURY CRUCIFIX CEMETERY**, which is a “collective” containing a total of 2,058 burials from several battlefield cemeteries, has 173 Canadian burials.

The same is true for Canadian Memorials in Belgium at Passendale and Sint-Juliaan, and at Newfoundland Memorials in Beaumont-Hamel, Gueudecourt, Masnières, Monchy-le-Preux and Kortrijk: the cemeteries nearby contain a high number of Canadian and Dominion of Newfoundland burials and commemorations.



## Canadians “Known Unto God”

What I discovered on my recent trip is that the number of Canadian burials is under-represented online because only the names of the *known* casualties are listed in the databases. At every cemetery I visited, I checked the Registry on-site and found most also had Canadians laid to rest whose identities are unknown. The lack of identity is due to severe trauma during battle or because the remains were moved from the original burial site which ended up behind the shifting front line and was destroyed.



At the **COURCELETTE BRITISH CEMETERY**, near the **COURCELETTE CANADIAN BATTLEFIELD MEMORIAL**, there are nearly as many Canadians with no known identity (386) as there are those whose identities are known (399). *Heartbreaking*. These tombstones simply read, “Known unto God”. The names of all of Canada’s missing (no known grave) are listed on the Canadian National Vimy Memorial.

I tried to design self-guided itineraries that include cemeteries with a high number of Canadian burials, but I strongly encourage you to stop anywhere you see the ubiquitous dark-green CWGC sign indicating a cemetery nearby and pay your respects to all the brave men who lost their lives in the Great War.

Safe travels, KW.

