

MESSINES RIDGE BRITISH CEMETERY AND N.Z. MEMORIAL

Located on the Messines Ridge, there are stunning views across the landscape from here. Before the First World War Messines (Mesen) was home to the 'Institution Royale': an orphanage and school. The buildings were destroyed by shelling in 1914, and the German Army fortified the ruins, taking advantage of the many deep cellars. Here on the edge of town stood the Institution windmill. It was used by the Germans as an observation and machine-gun post. At 3.10 am on 7 June 1917, 19 mines were blown beneath the German positions along the Messines ridge, stunning the defenders. Some 80,000 Commonwealth soldiers advanced behind a creeping wall of exploding shells and within three hours much of the ridge had been taken.

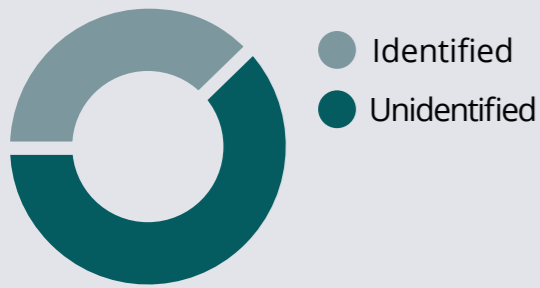
This cemetery was begun after the Armistice, when remains were brought here from across the battlefields around Messines. At the entrance is the New Zealand Memorial. Unveiled in 1924, it was built where the windmill once stood. It is one of seven CWGC memorials on the Western Front listing the names of New Zealand soldiers with no known grave. The cemetery with its unusual shelter building and distinctive memorial were designed by Charles Holden.



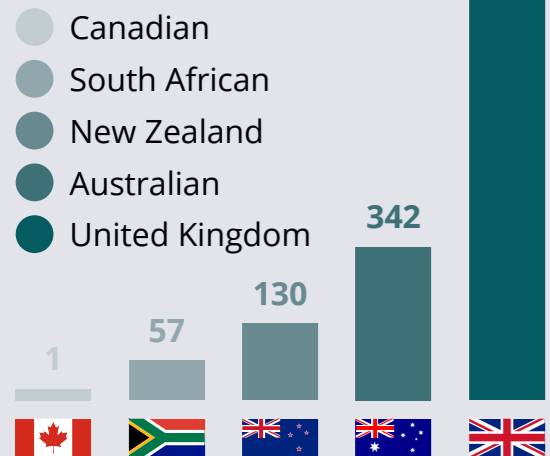
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COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES

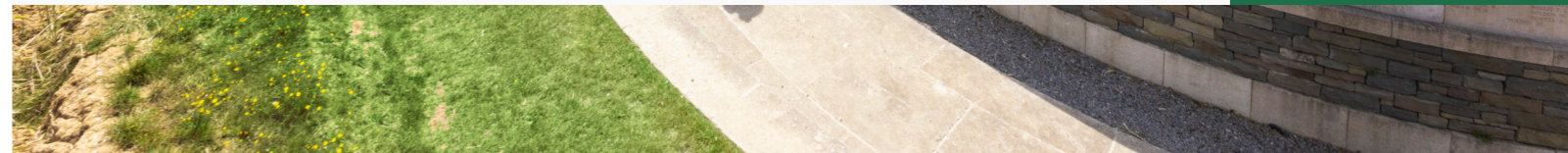
Total number of graves: **1,536**



Force nationalities



For more information please scan here.



LIEUTENANT ALLEN COOPER



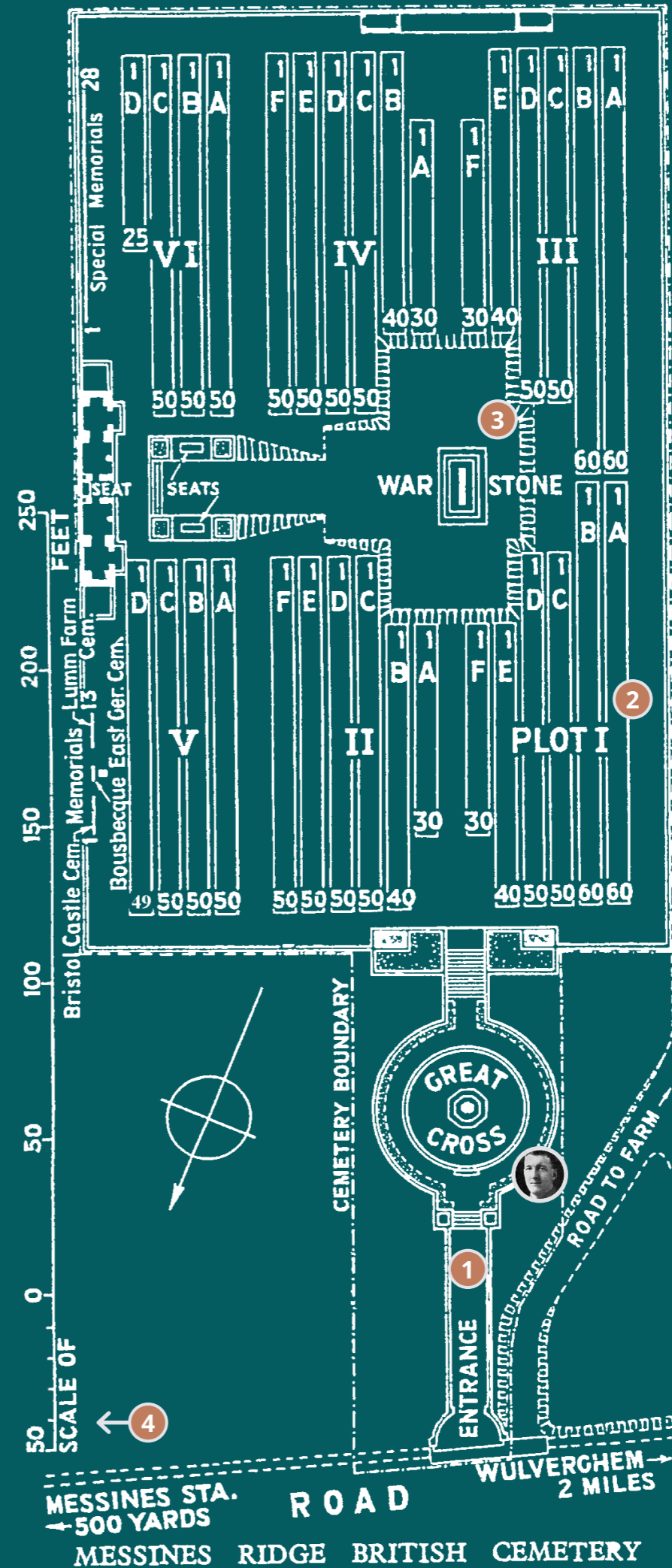
Allen was the son of Margaret and William Cooper of Waihi, New Zealand. He served with the Auckland Regiment and fought at Gallipoli and in Egypt. In 1916 he was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his actions during the Battle of the Somme.

On 7 June 1917, Allen took part in the New Zealand Division's attack at Messines. When the fighting was over, Allen was listed as missing. He was 24 years old. His mother received his MC in 1918. Allen is commemorated on CWGC's Messines Ridge (N.Z.) Memorial.



HIGHLIGHTS

- When you arrive take a moment to pause and appreciate the unique entrance to this cemetery. You are led through a stone cutting to the New Zealand memorial, the Cross of Sacrifice towering over you. The memorial is a stone band around the grassy mound - you are then presented with a choice, left or right? The cemetery is only revealed after you round the memorial and climb the stone steps behind.
- On your right as you enter the cemetery you will see the springbok headstone badge of South Africa. Most of the South African graves here are unidentified but we know that these men died in the spring of 1918 when the Germans launched a massive offensive here, hoping to knock Britain out of the war. The South African Brigade was holding the line here when the full weight of the German assault fell upon them.
- Head to the front of the cemetery and take in the view. Imagine being a Commonwealth soldier in the trenches below, looking up at the Germans dug in on the ridge here - it must have been a daunting prospect to attack this high ground. From up here the Germans could see into the Commonwealth positions and out across the battlefields to the city of Ypres.
- While in this area there are several important places you can discover. This is a special area for several nations. Located nearby is the New Zealand Messines Memorial Park and the Island of Ireland Peace Park. Both are worth a visit to explore the story of this landscape.



IN LIFE THEY WERE MATES & BROTHERS IN DEATH THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED

Inscription on the headstone of Private Keith Viles, VI. C. 38.

In the area
Along the ridge, returning to the town centre and following the CWGC signs, visitors will find the New Zealand Battlefield Memorial Messines. Via a path, visitors can walk to the Island of Ireland Peace Park as well.

Westtoer bike routes nearby

- Mijnslag
- Frontroute 14-18
- Gent-Wevelgem in Flanders Fields - 128 km
- Gent-Wevelgem in Flanders Fields - 100 km

Westtoer walking routes nearby

- Stadswandelroute Mesen

No step free access

Parking space

Seats present in cemetery