Who do we commemorate?
Personnel who died between 4 Aug 1914 and 31 Aug 1921 and 3 Sep 1939 and 31 Dec 1947 whilst serving in a Commonwealth military force or specified auxiliary organisation.

Personnel who died between 4 Aug 1914 and 31 Aug 1921 and 3 Sep 1939 and 31 Dec 1947 after they were discharged from a Commonwealth military force, if their death was caused by their wartime service.

Commonwealth civilians who died between 3 Sep 1939 and 31 Dec 1947 as a consequence of enemy action, Allied weapons of war or whilst in an enemy prison camp.

How are casualties commemorated?
Military casualties buried in a grave are commemorated with a Commission headstone or pedestal marker. If they have been identified, their military details are engraved in a standard layout. Some may also have a religious emblem and personal inscription chosen by their family.

Individuals who died away from the battlefield, or after they were discharged may have been buried by their family in a churchyard or civil cemetery and their grave marked by a private memorial.
Those with no known grave are commemorated on one of the Memorials to the Missing, according to where and when they died.

Commonwealth civilian casualties from the Second World War are commemorated in specially bound volumes of the Roll of Honour held at Westminster Abbey in London.

**What records do we hold?**
After the two World Wars we collated burial and identification information. These records provide us with the essential information we need to commemorate each casualty correctly. They are available to view online at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org).

We do not hold service records or information about how a casualty died.

The CWGC Archive is a rich resource about the history of the organisation and the cemeteries and memorials we maintain. You can explore digitised documents at [www.cwgc.org/history-and-archives/cwgc-archive](http://www.cwgc.org/history-and-archives/cwgc-archive) and we welcome visits by researchers.

**What should you do if you think there is an error in our records?**
The information we hold relates to the casualty at the time of their death and their next of kin when we contacted them after both World Wars. Military personnel often moved between units and families moved house, so the details may be different to those you are familiar with.

Whilst we take great care to ensure our records are accurate we know that spelling errors and other mistakes do exist. We amend information on a daily basis. If you spot a problem, please contact us with the details and any relevant documents you have found. We will investigate and make any corrections necessary.

**What should you do if you think someone has been missed from our records?**
Firstly, please check our list of casualties at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org). Start with just a surname and initials and tick the box for either First or Second World War. If you can’t find them, it may be because they did not qualify as a war casualty.

To ensure that everyone is treated fairly there are established criteria. If you find documents that show that they died within the set dates and their death was a direct result of their war service, please contact us. We will work with the relevant Service Authority to investigate and reach an adjudication.
Sadly, some ex-servicemen died soon after they returned home, many in the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918-1919. Others died many years later as a result of their wounds. Whilst their service may be recognised by their name appearing on a local war memorial, only those who died during the war years as a direct result of their service are officially considered to be a war casualty.

**Why has the CWGC not marked a grave with a Commission headstone?**

Although we commemorate a casualty we may not know where they are buried. Even where we have been able to locate the grave, the burial rights may not be owned by the CWGC, or the authorities or family may not want a Commission headstone installed. We will work with both the authorities and family members to try to find a solution that everyone is happy with.

**What happens if the CWGC cannot mark a grave?**

If we can no longer mark or maintain a grave because of local conditions, we will arrange for the casualty to be commemorated at an alternative location. If the circumstances change we will see if we can reverse the alternative commemoration arrangements.

Where we are not able to confirm the exact location of a grave we may place a Special Memorial with a superscription ‘Buried Elsewhere in this Cemetery’ or ‘Believed to be Buried in this Cemetery’.

**Why isn’t there a Personal Inscription on every headstone?**

Each Commonwealth government made their own decision about whether Personal Inscriptions would be permitted, how the information would be collected and who would pay the fee.

We were not always able to contact relatives after the war. In these cases, close family members may ask for an inscription to be added.
What happens if human remains are found today?

Human remains are still discovered during farming and building works. Members of the public visiting the former battlefield areas who come across artefacts should not touch them as unexploded munitions are still dangerous. If they discover remains, even small pieces, they should report them to the local police or CWGC straight away. Please do not move the remains or any items found nearby as the position of them can be crucial in enabling an identification.

If artefacts and historical information suggest a particular unit or a named individual, every effort is made by the Service Authorities to trace present day relatives and, where appropriate, carry out DNA testing.

Whether identification is successful or not, the casualty is reburied alongside their comrades in a CWGC cemetery close to where they were found, and their grave marked with a Commission headstone.

Can CWGC use DNA to identify casualties buried as unknown soldiers?

Every effort was made to identify individuals at the time, but occasionally new evidence is presented to us suggesting a name for an individual who was buried as an unknown casualty.

We follow the principle that the war dead should, as far as possible, be allowed to rest in peace and not be disturbed. Therefore, we do not permit exhumations from the graves of Commonwealth war casualties for the purposes of identification.

CWGC and the Service Authorities will investigate, and if the documentary evidence is clear and convincing the grave will be rededicated with a new headstone bearing the name of the casualty.

Members of the public are welcome to attend burial and rededication ceremonies. Details are published each month at www.cwgc.org/learn/news-and-events.