



MAPLE COPSE CEMETERY

Imagine a moonscape of shattered trees and overlapping shell holes: this was the landscape here, as far as the eye could see, by the end of the First World War. Fighting had raged back and forth over this ground, and while time has healed the scars, this cemetery is a witness to the terrible destruction once wrought on the landscape. In 1915 and 1916, a medical unit supporting the troops fighting for the nearby high ground of Mount Sorrel buried some 300 men here, carefully marking and recording each grave. In the years that followed, however, artillery rained down and after the 1918 armistice only a handful of graves could be found, and even fewer individuals could be identified.

Instead of adding the names of these lost men to the Menin Gate, the Commission placed memorial stones here. On closer inspection, each bears the inscription, 'Known to be buried in this cemetery'. As many of these markers aren't placed upon graves, the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens designed a striking layout for this cemetery, with rows of stones facing one another.

This is a special cemetery that needs to be seen to be understood.



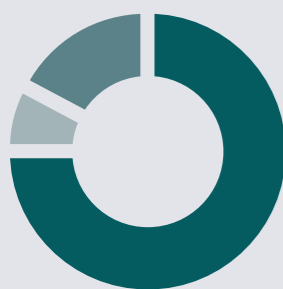
Carrying wounded near Maple Copse, August 1915 © IWM Q 50257



MAPLE COPSE CEMETERY

COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES

Total service personnel commemorated: **309**



- Identified grave with name
- Grave, but without name
- Named on a special memorial stone

Force nationalities

- Canada
- United Kingdom

155

154



For more information please scan here.



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1919: scattered wooden grave markers in a devastated landscape at Maple Copse © IWM Q 109521





Photo courtesy of Queen's University Ontario Archives

LIEUTENANT GORDON FIFE

The men who fought at Ypres came from every walk of life. Lieutenant Gordon Fife of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry was killed in action on 2 June 1916, during the Battle of Mount Sorrel. Gordon was only 27 when he died but had achieved much in his short life. A lawyer and history lecturer at Alberta University, he had studied at Queen's University in Ontario and at Oxford before the war. Who knows what this remarkable academic could have gone on to achieve if his life hadn't been cut short?

His grave is one of the handful here that were identified after the war. You will find his headstone directly behind the Cross of Sacrifice. Take a moment to appreciate the inscription provided by his parents. (Plot I, Row B, Grave 1).

1



2



3



4



HIGHLIGHTS

- 1** When you arrive, pause to admire the entrance building.

This cemetery has a dramatic entrance building. Pause for a moment and check out how it frames the Cross of Sacrifice, then enter the tunnel-like arch. You have now passed from the everyday world into a special place of remembrance. Go, give it a try, and see what you think.

- 2** A moat?

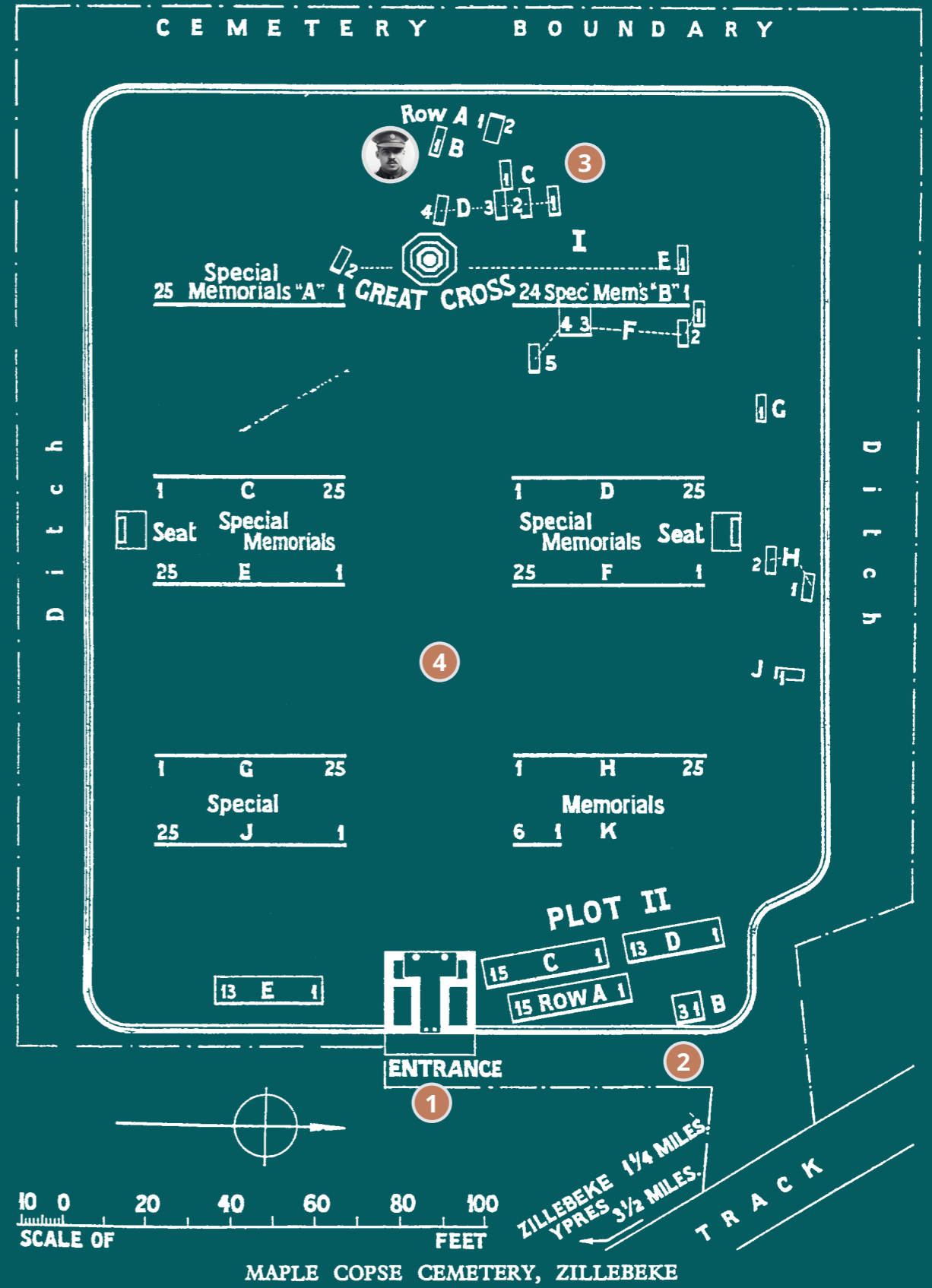
Or is it just a ditch? It's up to you to decide, but like the special entrance building, the ditch divides the cemetery from the surrounding landscape without the need for a wall or hedge. It is a clever, elegant, and practical piece of design, but is it a moat?

- 3** Head towards the Cross of Sacrifice.

While most of the headstones here are carefully ordered, towards the rear of the cemetery you will find some which are very much out of order. These were the ones that remained at the end of the war and their disorder tells this story.

- 4** Walk amongst the rows of headstones and look out for maple leaves.

You will see lots of maple leaves here as they are carved upon every Canadian grave, but what about the name of this cemetery? Interestingly the wood that was here during the war was named Maple Copse long before any Canadian troops arrived. It is a nice, if heart-breaking, coincidence that so many Canadians now lie at rest here.



In the area
Close to Sanctuary Wood Cemetery & Hill 62 Canadian Memorial

Westtoer bike routes nearby
• Vredesfietsroute
• Frontroute 14-18

Westtoer walking routes nearby
• Het landschap als getuige

Step free access

1 parking space

Seats present in cemetery