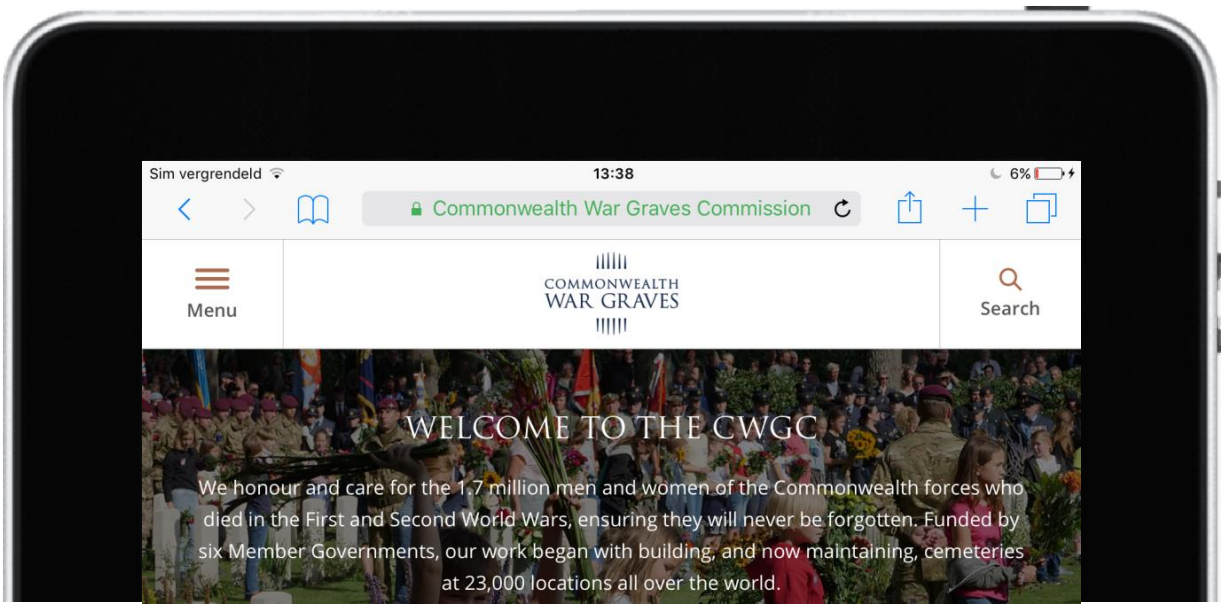
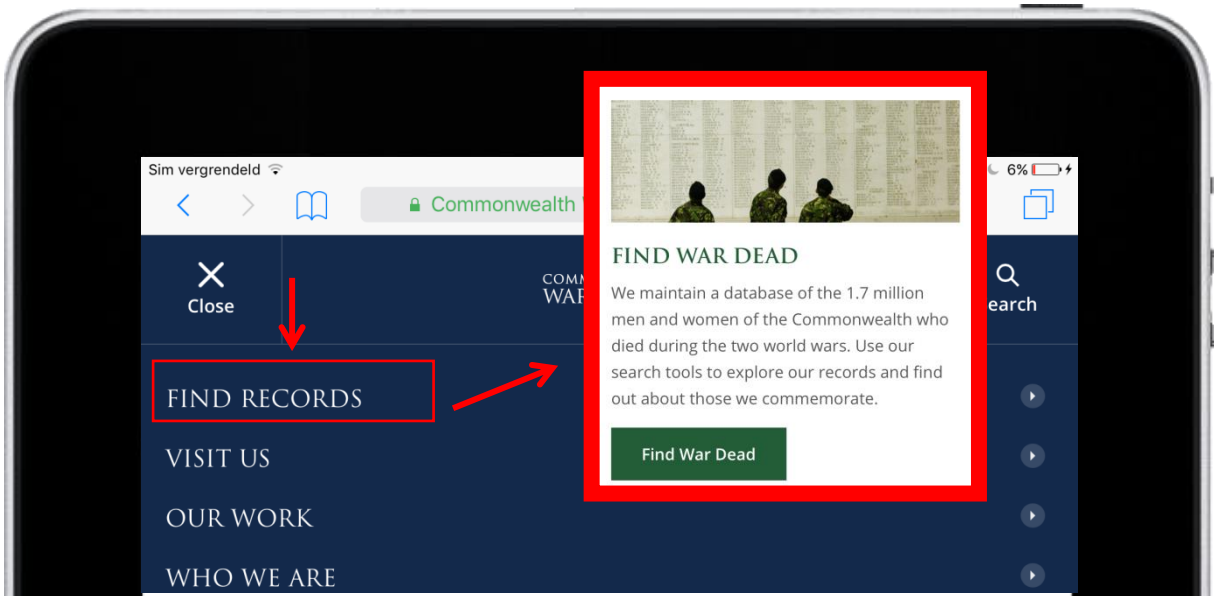
Step-by-step guide task 1:

Identity card.

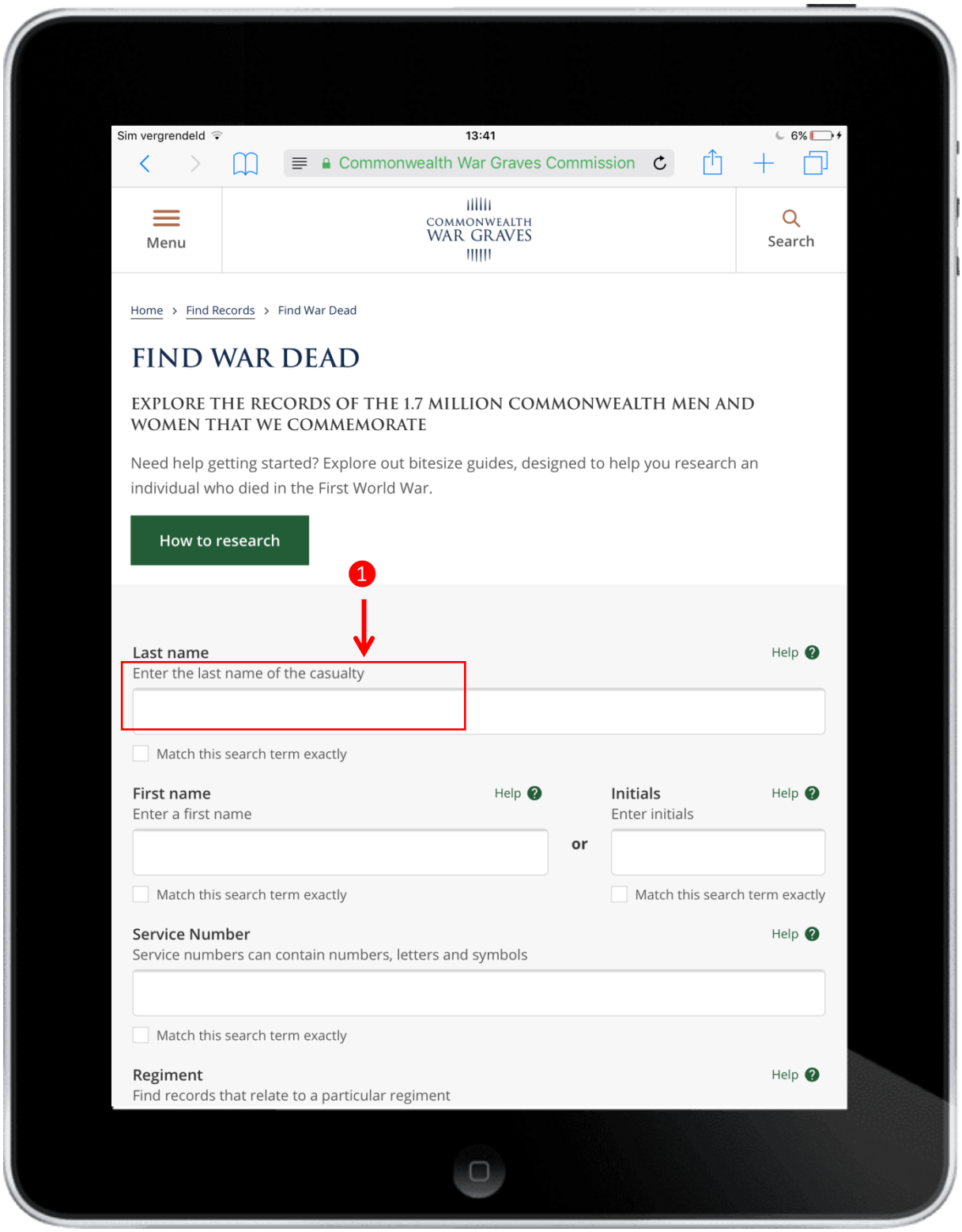
1. Surf to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website: cwgc.org.

2. At the top left you will find a fold-out menu. Click on the "Find Records" and “Find War Dead” buttons.





3. Follow the five steps shown on the following two pages. Only fill in the last name and select "First World War". Click on "Date of Death" beneath "Additional Fields". Enter the date of death and click on "Search".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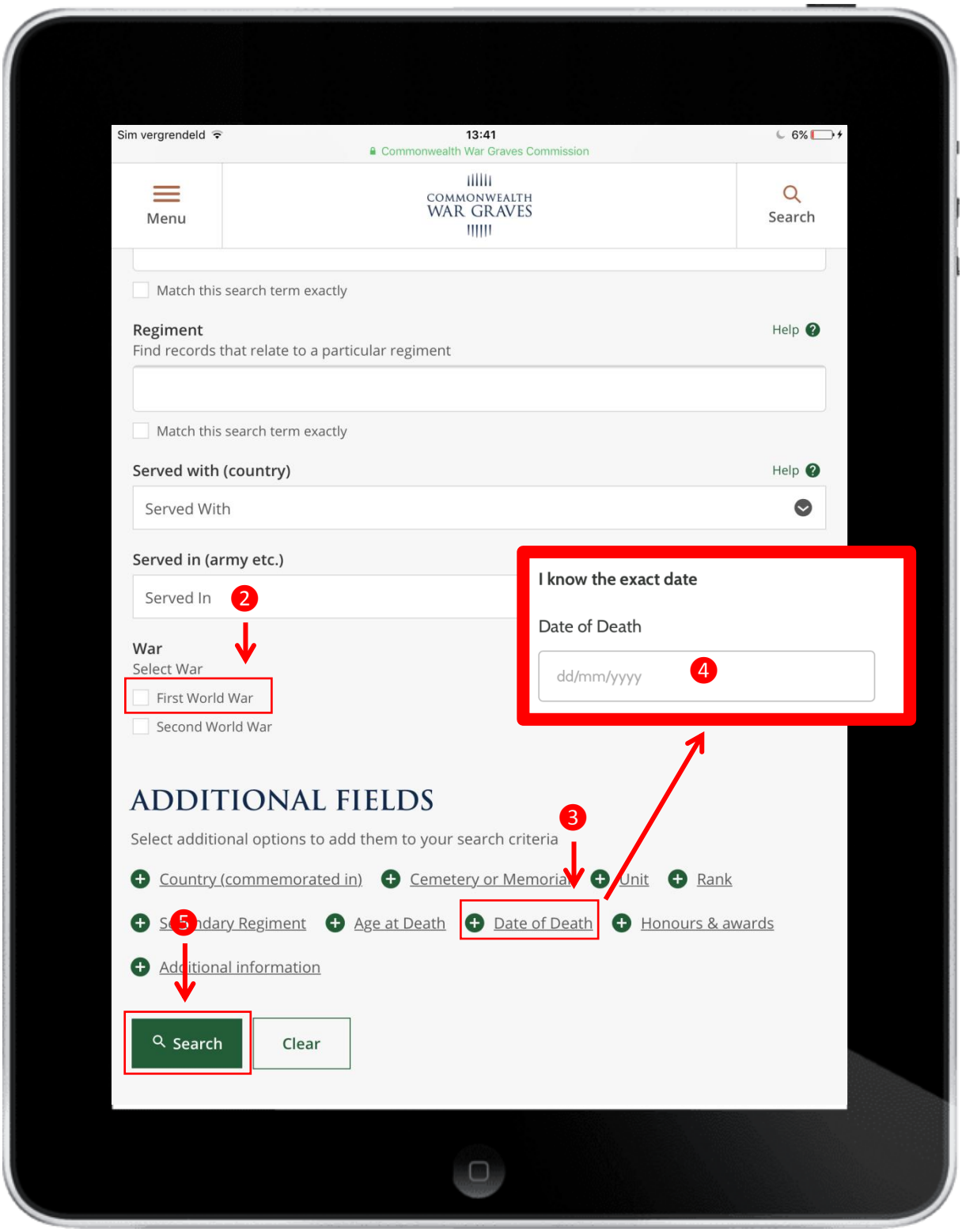
13:41
6%
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Menu
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES
Search
Home > Find Records > Find War Dead
FIND WAR DEAD
EXPLORE THE RECORDS OF THE 1.7 MILLION COMMONWEALTH MEN AND WOMEN THAT WE COMMEMORATE
Need help getting started? Explore out bitesize guides, designed to help you research an individual who died in the First World War.
How to research
1
Last name
Help
Enter the last name of the casualty
Match this search term exactly
First name
Help
Enter a first name
Match this search term exactly
or
Initials
Help
Enter initials
Match this search term exactly
Service Number
Help
Service numbers can contain numbers, letters and symbols
Match this search term exactly
Regiment
Help
Find records that relate to a particular regiment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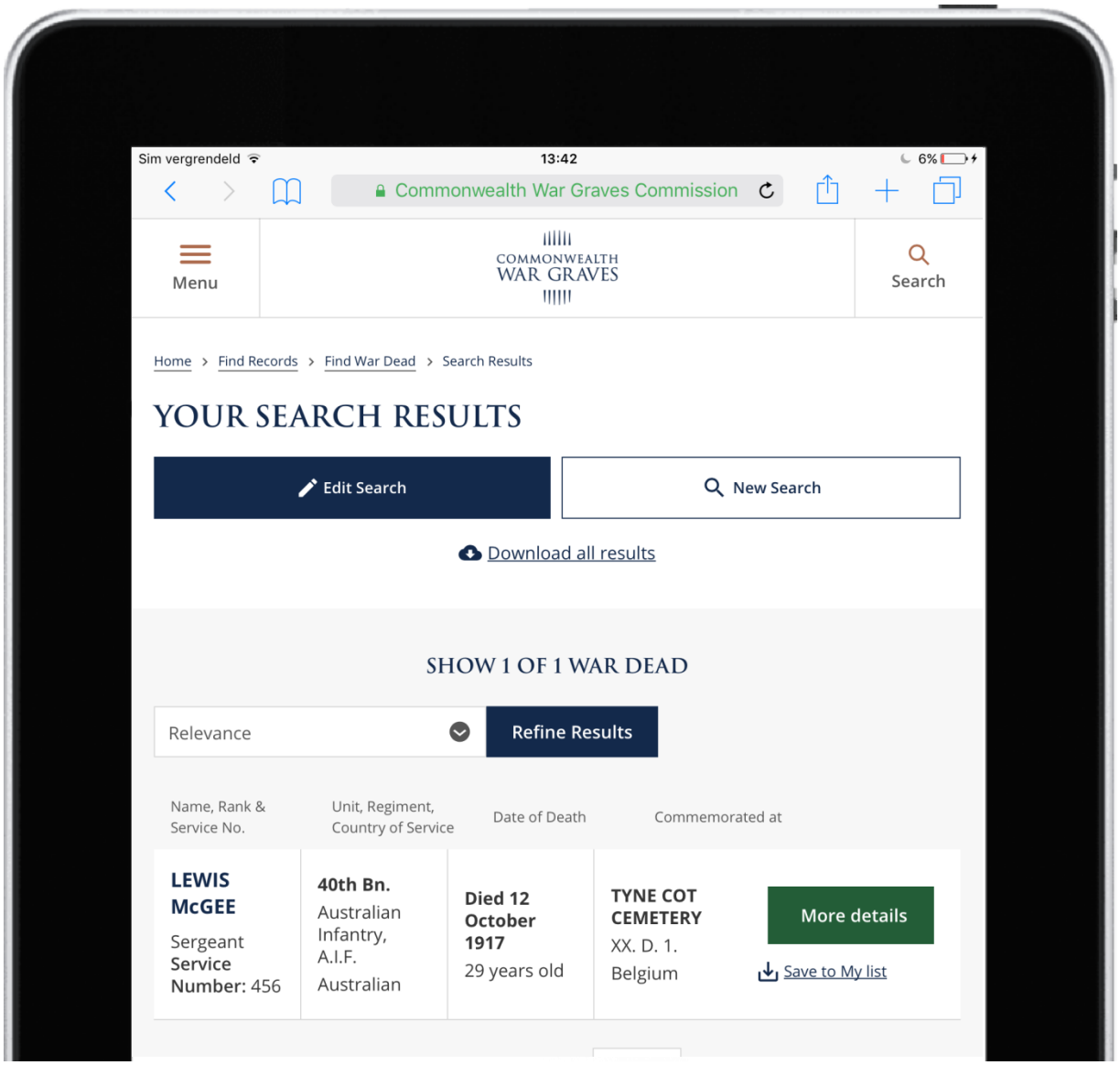
Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Menu
COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES
Search
Match this search term exactly
Regiment
Help
Find records that relate to a particular regiment
Match this search term exactly
Served with (country)
Help
Served With
Served in (army etc.)
Served In
2
War
Select War
First World War
Second World War
I know the exact date
Date of Death
dd/mm/yyyy
4
ADDITIONAL FIELDS
3
Select additional options to add them to your search criteria
Country (commemorated in)
Cemetery or Memorial
Unit
Rank
5
Secondary Regiment
Age at Death
Date of Death
Honours & awards
Additional information
Search
Clear

4. The example shown here below is Sergeant Lewis McGee. For your fallen soldier, it is possible you will see two or even more names.

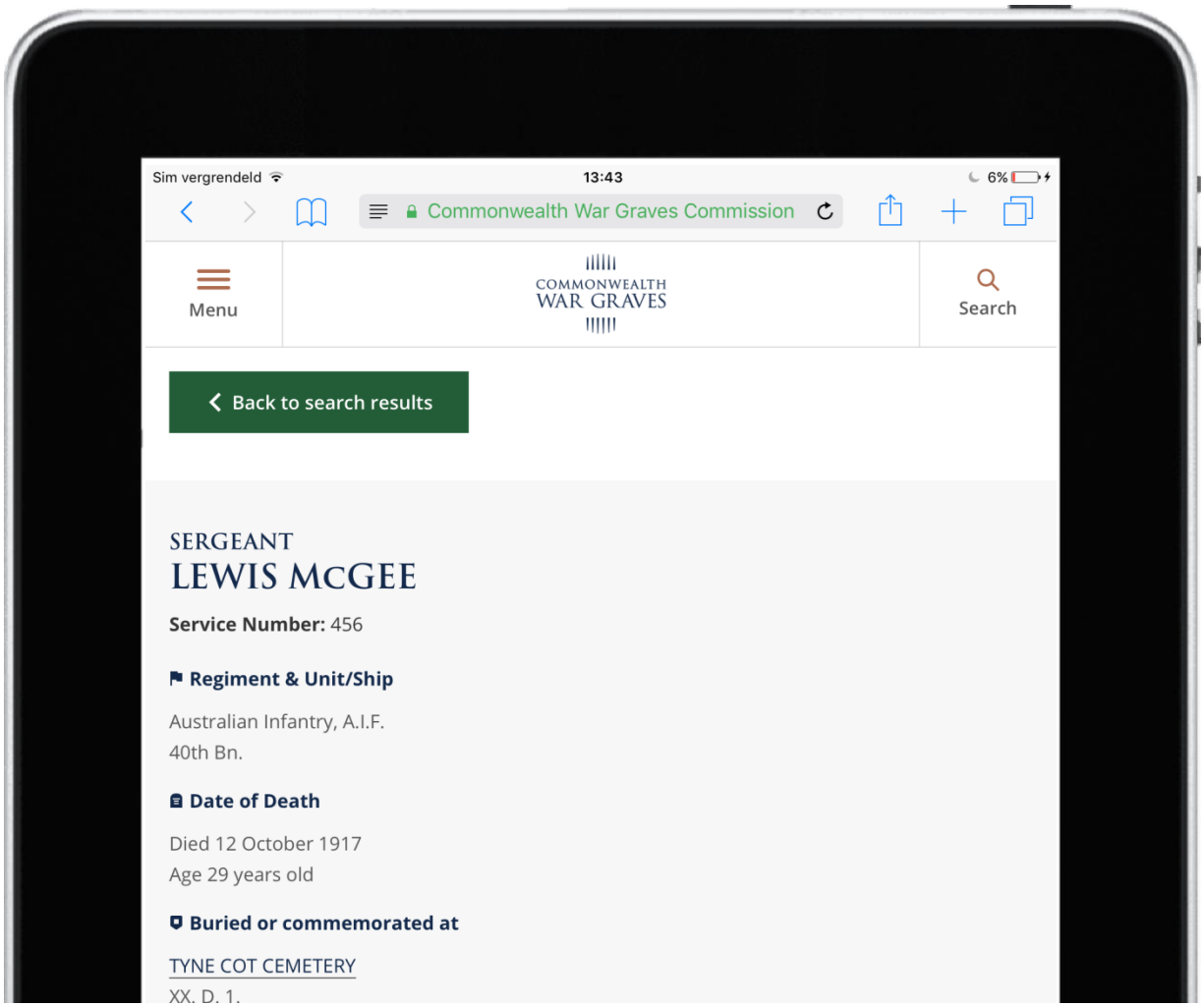
There are two ways to check the search results:

- Is the name connected to Tyne Cot Cemetery or Tyne Cot Memorial? It is not your soldier if another cemetery is mentioned.
- Do the first name or initials match the soldier's name? When they don't, it is not your soldier.

When you still doubt, ask our museum staff to help you.



5. Click on “More details” next to the name of your soldier to see his basic information. Use this information to fill in as much as possible on the identity card. If some information is not mentioned, write a dash.



Some remarks:

- If not mentioned, you can derive the ‘country of service’ from the regiment. If no specific country is mentioned, the soldier had the British nationality. In the example of Lewis McGee, the country of service is Australia. The following abbreviations can help you on your way:

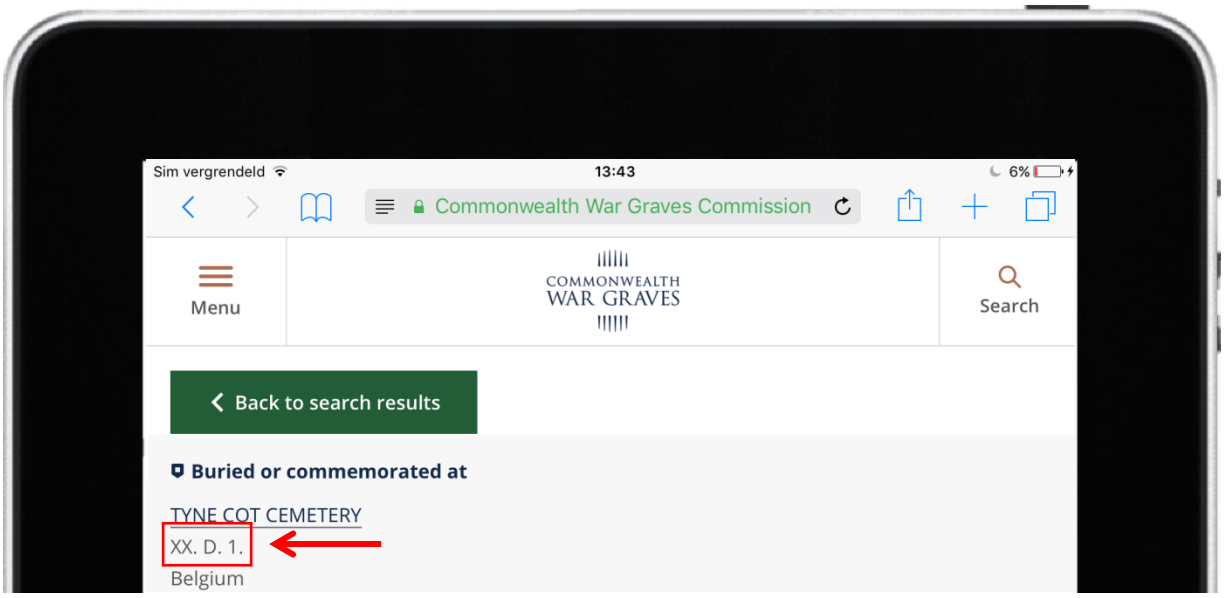
  A.I.F. – Australian Imperial Force
  C.E.F. – Canadian Expeditionary Force
  N.Z.E.F. – New Zealand Expeditionary Force

- Use appendix 1 ‘Glossary’ or appendix 3 ‘British military awards’ in the information folder to understand **abbreviations**.

- **Generally an officer doesn't have a service number.** The military ranks that make someone an officer are, from low to high: Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier and General.

6. Place of remembrance: grave or memorial.

A. Your soldier has a grave and is commemorated at Tyne Cot Cemetery: write down the Roman plot number, the letter of the row and the grave number you see below "Buried or commemorated at". See appendix 6 "Roman numerals" to read Roman numerals.



B. Your soldier has no known grave and is commemorated on a panel of Tyne Cot Memorial: write down the panel number. Please note: the basic information often mentions several panel numbers, for example 108-111. To determine the exact number, go to "panel list" below "From the CWGC Archives". Then click on "Click to view". At the top of the document you can read the exact panel number. In the example below, the panel is 108.

7. Marking the grave or panel on the 'Cemetery Plan'.

A. If your soldier has a known grave, your bundle contains a plan of Tyne Cot Cemetery. This is a concentration cemetery, meaning that many soldiers who were buried scattered on the battlefield were reburied there. A few smaller cemeteries in the area were also concentrated on Tyne Cot Cemetery. This mainly happened in the first years after the war (1919-1921).

➔ **Plot I and II:** These two plots were created during the war. On 4 October 1917 the 3rd Australian division captured some bunkers at Tyne Cot. Three of these bunkers can still be seen at the cemetery. The largest bunker, beneath the Cross Of Sacrifice, was used as a dressing post. Soldiers who died there because of their injuries were buried on site, next to the bunker. You can see this by the scattered position of the graves.

- ➔ **Plot III (3) to LXV (65):** These are the plots that were created after the war. The former location of the grave or initial burial site was carefully written down on a Burial Return Sheet.

B. When your soldier doesn't have an grave, your bundle contains a plan of Tyne Cot Memorial. The Menin Gate is the best known memorial to the missing for those who died in the Ypres area. All British missing soldiers from the beginning of the war up to and including 15 August 1917 are listed there. All names of missing casualties from British overseas territories are also on the Menin Gate regardless of the date of death. Only New Zealand is an exception: they have their own missing memorials linked to specific places and battles.

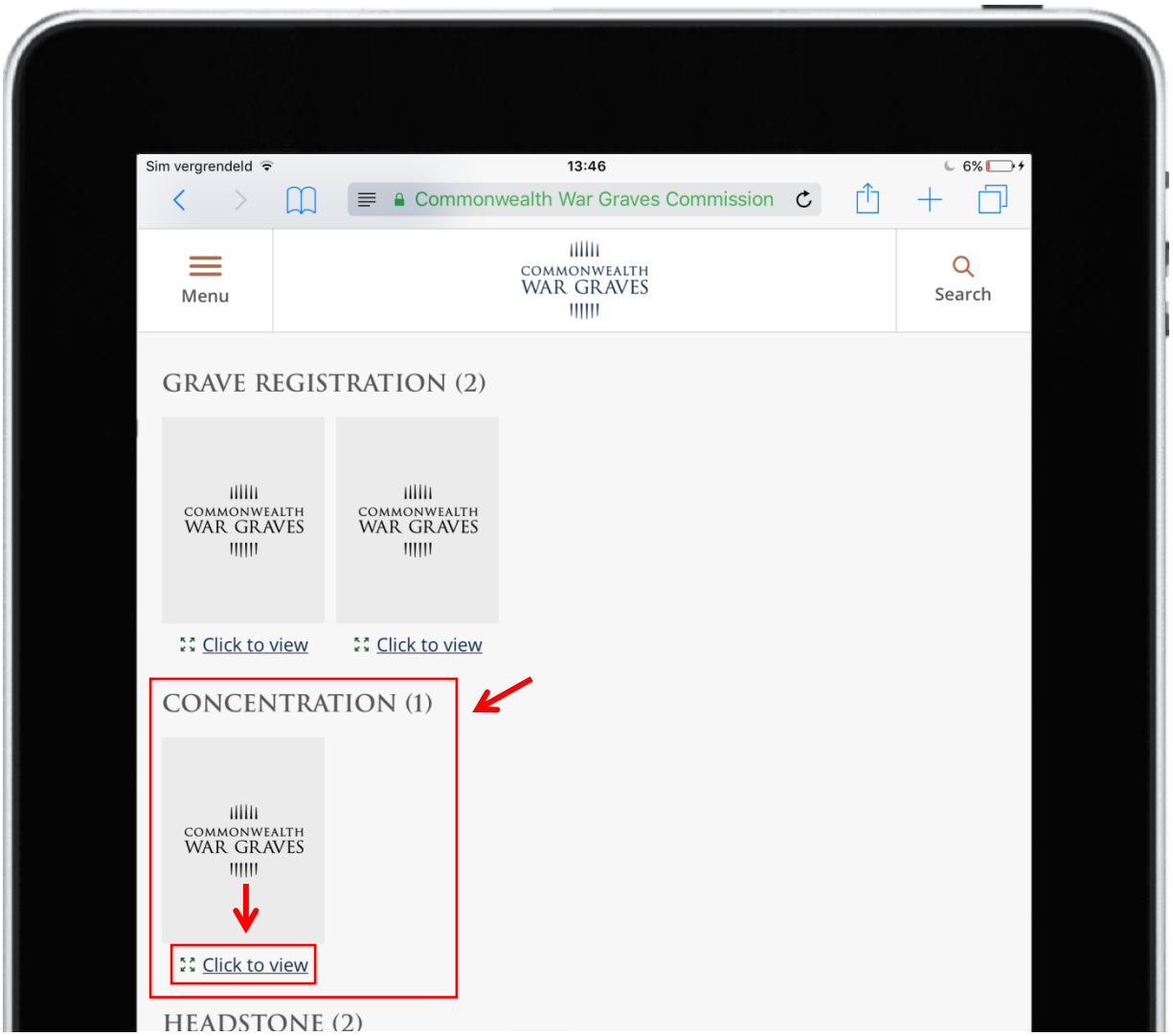
   Tyne Cot Memorial commemorates the names of missing British soldiers who were killed in the Ypres area between 16 August 1917 until 11 November 1918. In the center there are 9 panels containing the names of almost 1,200 New Zealand soldiers.

Indicate on the plan where your soldier is buried or mentioned on the Memorial to the Missing.

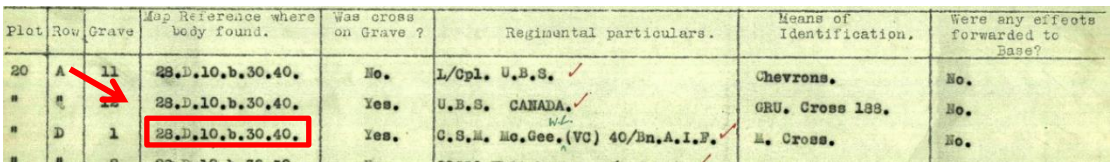
If your soldier is buried in Plot III to LXV, you also carry out step 8 'Concentration'.

8. Filling in the "Concentration" box. This step should only be carried out if your soldier is buried in plot III (3) to plot LXV (65). For the soldier's in these plots, the coordinates of the original burial place on the battlefield was carefully written down. The coordinate can be found on the "Burial Return Sheet" and will help you to mark the place where the soldier died.

On the CWGC website, scroll down and click to view the document below "Concentration". Note: this is only visible when a Burial Return Sheet is available. Click on “Click to view” to read the document.



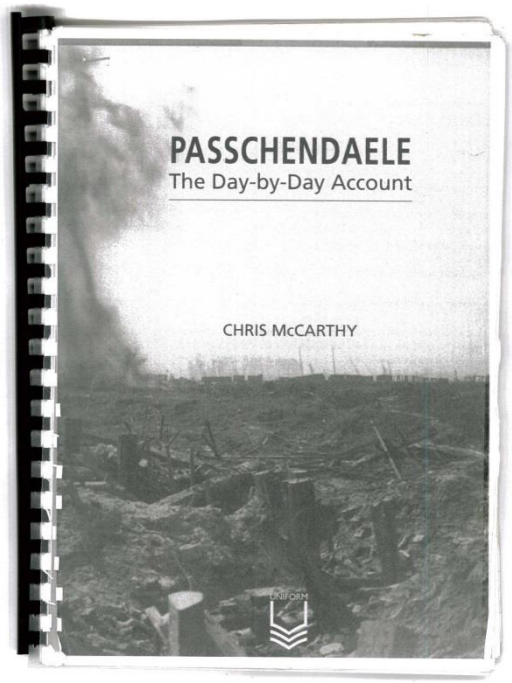
Search the soldier's name and coordinate like the example below. Write down the coordinate in the appropriate box on the identity card. When you doubt, ask our museum staff to help you.



Plot	Row	Grave	Map Reference where body found.	Was cross on Grave ?	Regimental particulars.	Means of Identification.	Were any effects forwarded to Base?
20	A	11	28.D.10.b.30.40.	No.	L/Cpl. U.B.S.	Chevrons.	No.
"	"	12	28.D.10.b.30.40.	Yes.	U.B.S. CANADA.	GRU. Cross 188.	No.
"	D	1	28.D.10.b.30.40.	Yes.	C.S.M. Mc.Gee.(VC) 40/Bn.A.I.F.	M. Cross.	No.

Step-by-step guide task 2:

The fatal day.



1. Search the date your soldier died in the book Passchendaele - The Day-by-Day Account.

   This is a book that chronologically, day after day, explains the actions of British units during the Third Battle of Ypres, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele. It is a good source to find essential basic information.

2. Search your soldier's division on the date he died. Read the text that is relevant to your soldier's unit: passages that concern his brigade and battalion.

   ➔ Look for information about the unit of your soldier and write down the following information:

   - What happened that day?
   - Where was the battalion (or brigade) during that event?

     Write down all place names or toponyms that are relevant to your soldier in the 'notes box' on your bundle, e.g. the name of a farm, woodland, … This will be useful for your further research and map task.

   - What were the battalion's objectives?

     If an attack took place, write down which area or locations the battalion had to capture or the task it was assigned.

   - Use appendix 1.2 'Glossary' if you don't understand certain terminology.

   ➔ Search the map that corresponds with the text in your book. On the map you will see the position and objectives of the division and brigade of your soldier. Note: the map is not always on the same page as the corresponding text.

3. Go to to the last pages in this information folder. Here you can find a copy of a “war diary” or "regimental history".

   A regimental book or war diary contains much more detailed information about the role of a battalion during the Battle of Passchendaele.

   - A war diary was kept by each unit and structurally describes military actions and contains orders and reports on a monthly basis.
   - A regimental book describes the regiment's war effort in the First World War. The book is mainly based on war diaries and is structured chronologically.

4. Complete the information found in the book Passchendaele - The Day-by-Day Account with the information you find in the war diary or regimental book.

   ➔ What were the battalion’s objectives?

   ➔ How were orders carried out, if this is described?

   ➔ What was the result?

Step-by-step guide 3: Create a map.

Using coordinates and toponyms.

As the war evolved into trench warfare, there was a need for clear and detailed maps. The British therefore adapted existing Belgian maps and developed their own uniform coordinate system. With these coordinates they could easily and more accurately determine points in the landscape, for example the position of enemy artillery.

Coordinates were often too abstract for infantrymen, which meant that toponyms were commonly used in addition to coordinates. Many toponyms (= place names) were used to name important places in the landscape. Their names can be attributed to the inventiveness of the cartographer or troops in the field.

This step-by-step guide describes how to use coordinates for:

- Determination of the location where your soldier was exhumed after the war (if a "Burial Return Sheet" is available).

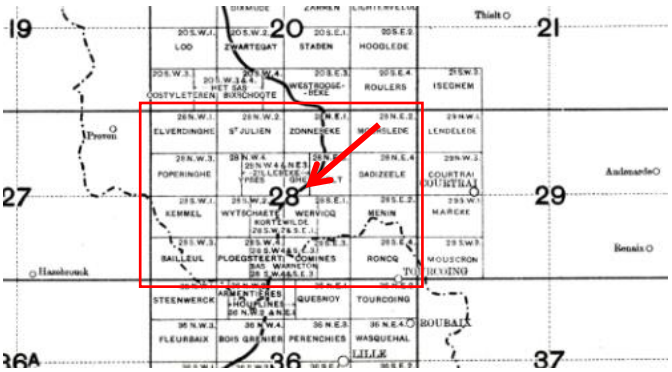
- Pinpointing toponyms if you can't find them on your printed A3 map. In that case, use appendix 4 "Coordinates and toponyms" where toponyms are linked to coordinates.

➔ Here we will use the following coordinate as an example:
28 D 27 b 30.45

Please note, sometimes a coordinate is written down as 28 D 27 b 3.4. In this case the "0" (the units) of the last numbers have been omitted. You can then read the coordinate as: 28 D 27 b 30.40.

1. The first number: the 'map sheet' (28 D 27 b 30.45)

   Belgian maps are divided into large numbered map sheets. Each map covers a specific area. The Belgian number system was adopted by the British. ➔ In our example this is sheet 28.

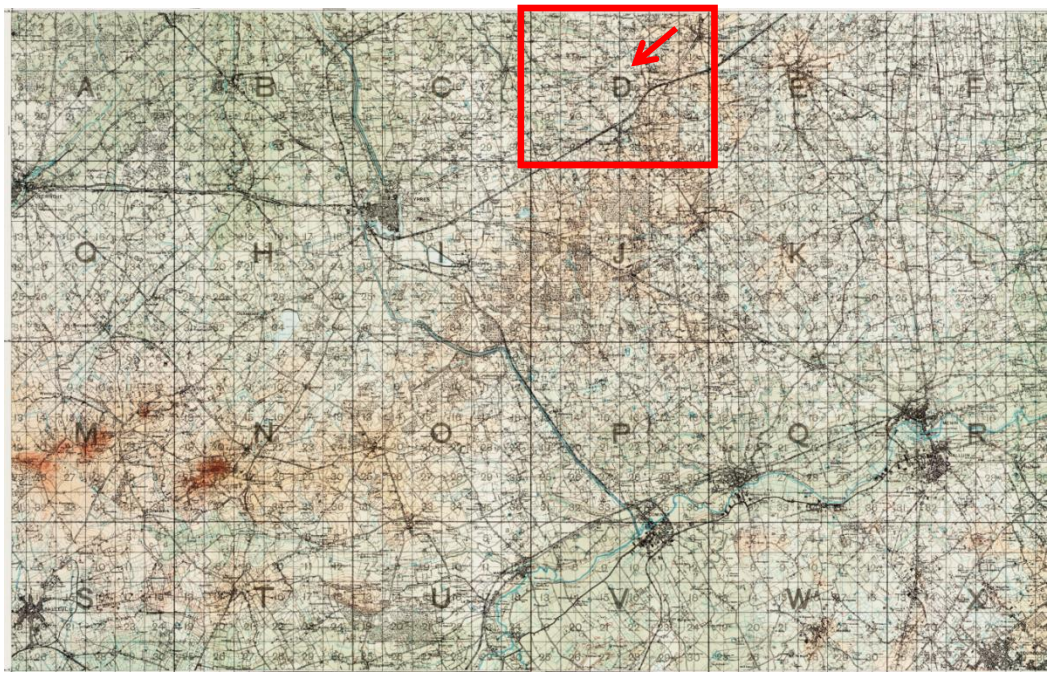


Please note: the A3 map you will draw on is already cropped to the area that is relevant for your soldier.

This means you don't have to take this first number into account.

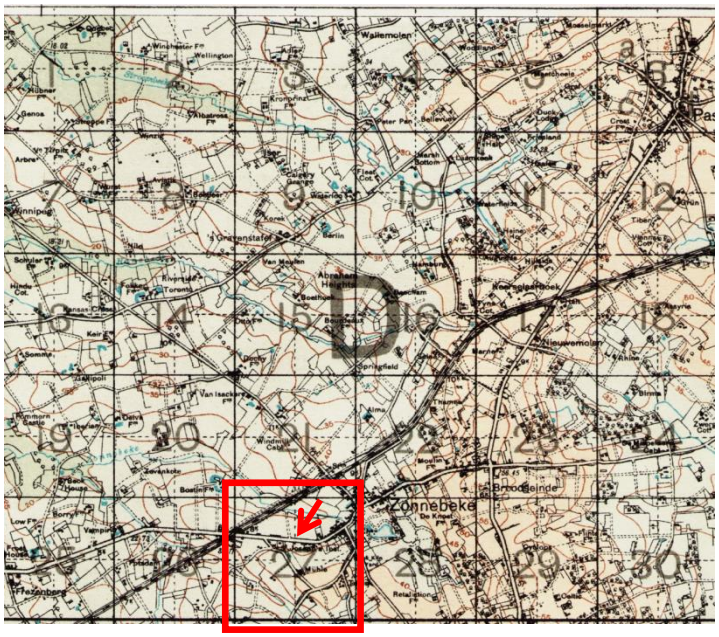
2. The first letter: the zone (28 D 27 b 30.45)

Map sheets are divided in square zones. Each zone is marked with a capital letter from A to X. ➔ In our example this is zone D.



On your A3 map you will find this large capital letter(s) in a corner or on the edge. If you do not see this letter, you can assume that all of your map is located in the correct zone(s).

3. The second number: the quadrant (28 D 27 b 30.45)

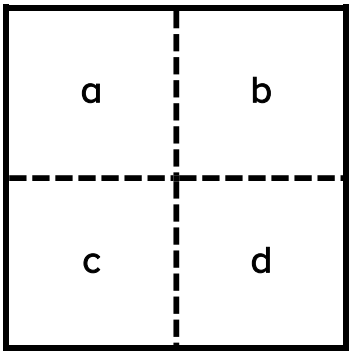


Each zone is then divided into 30 or 36 smaller, numbered squares. The number in each square marks which one you need.

➔ In our example this is number 27.

4. The second letter: the segment (28 D 27 b 30.45)

   Each quadrant is subdivided into four small segments: a, b, c and d. This small letter is never printed on the map but their presence is indicated with a dotted line. The table next to the cropped segment below shows you how the letters are positioned:

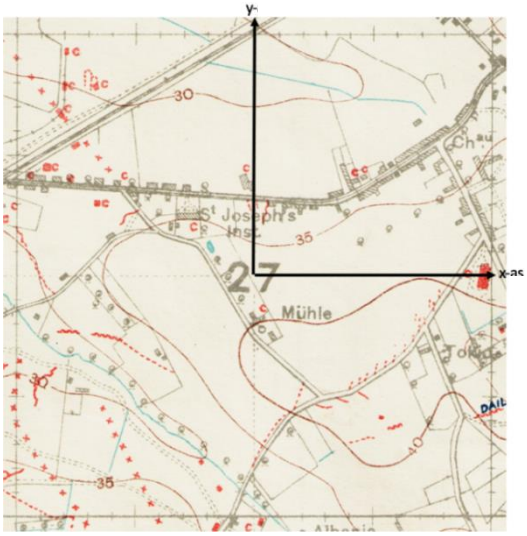


➔ In our example the segment is b:

5. The last digits: the x-y coordinates (28. D 27 b 30.45)

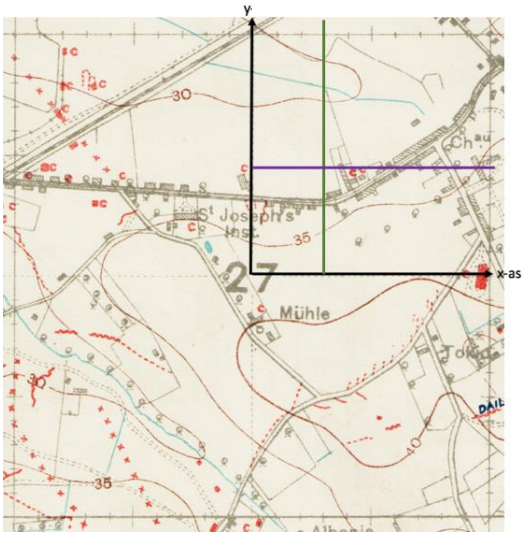
   The last two digits make it possible to determine the exact point on your map. The numbers are x-y coordinates so it is advised to use a ruler.

➔ In our example, our point lies in segment "b". We therefore draw the axes from the bottom left corner of this segment.



➔ Determine the x coordinate: in the example this is 30.45. On your map there are dashes in the edges of the quadrant. Count from left to right to the third one (*). Draw a vertical line with a pencil, shown below in green.

➔ Determine the y coordinate: in the example this is 30.45. Count from bottom to top to the fourth and fifth dashes (*). Find the center between the two lines and draw a horizontal line, shown below in purple.



(*) Note: these British maps used yards as a unit of measurement. This does not correspond to metric units. Always use the dashes in the segment's border and don't use a ruler to measure, as the maps are not printed to scale.

The place where both lines intersect is the exact location of coordinate 28 D 27 b 30.45.