

Weatherman Walking

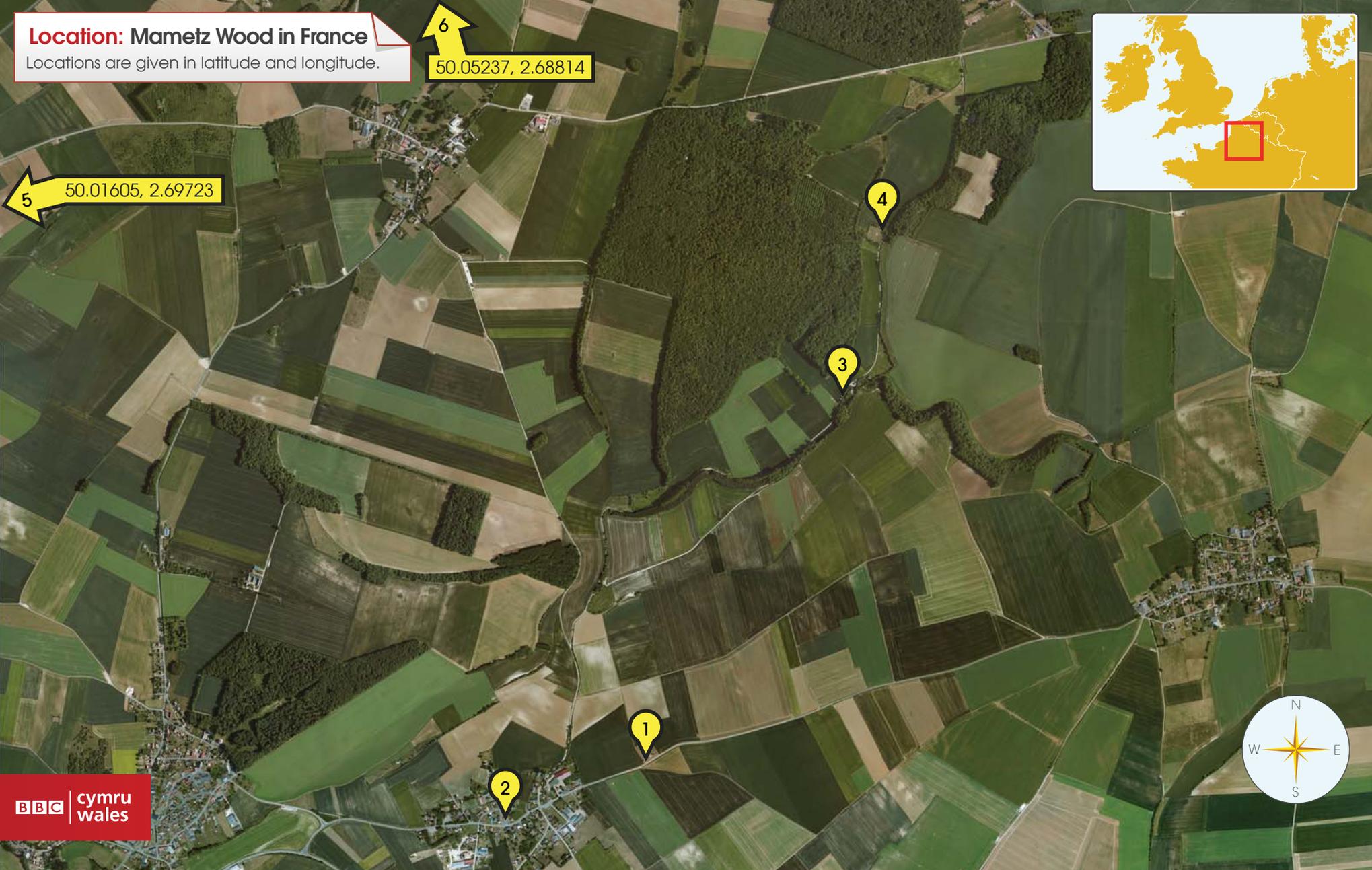
Mametz Wood

Location: Mametz Wood in France

Locations are given in latitude and longitude.

6
50.05237, 2.68814

5
50.01605, 2.69723



The Weatherman Walking maps are intended as a guide to help you walk the route. We recommend using a detailed map of the area in conjunction with this guide. Routes and conditions may have changed since this guide was written. The BBC takes no responsibility for any accident or injury that may occur while following the route. Always wear appropriate clothing and footwear and check weather conditions before heading out.

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Mametz Wood

The battle for Mametz Wood was the key battle for Welsh troops throughout World War One. It took place between 7-12 July 1916, the second week of the Battle of the Somme during which the British suffered heavy casualties. On the 1 July the village of Mametz had been captured by the British and the 38th Welsh Division was brought in a week later to capture the wood, part of the second German line of defence. Mametz Wood was heavily defended and the Welsh Division suffered over 4,000 casualties including 1,200 killed in the fighting.

Mametz is close to the town of Albert in the heart of the Somme region. In the programme we visit several important places of interest in the area but the main focus is on Mametz Wood which lies about a mile and half outside the village. It's easy to get around on foot or by car and the memorials and cemeteries are well signposted.

Please note that Mametz Wood is privately owned and not accessible without permission.



Dantzig Alley British Cemetery (49.99943, 2.74371)

Dantzig Alley Cemetery is situated to the east of the village of Mametz which lies about 8km east of Albert on the D64 which runs through the village. From Albert, take the D938 and turn off near the village of Fricourt on to the D64. If travelling on the main D929 turn off on to the D147, through the village of Contalmaison following road signs towards Mametz.

Dantzig Alley was the name given to a German trench that was captured on the 1 July 1916 enabling the village of Mametz to come under Allied control. The cemetery was begun later in the month and was used by field ambulances and fighting units until November of that year. At one stage it was regained by German troops but by the time of the Armistice it was back in British hands. At this time it contained only 183 graves but it rapidly increased in size as the dead were brought in from battlefields north and east of Mametz. The cemetery now contains 2,503 burials and commemorations, 518 of whom are unidentified. At the far end of the cemetery, with a view of Mametz Wood beyond, is a stone bench dedicated to the men of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. It has a quote in Welsh from the poet Hedd Wyn who died at Passchendaele in 1917. In translation it reads:

Distance cannot make you forgotten - The children of these dear hills
Heart and heart remain together - Even when separated



Dantzig Alley cemetery.

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Mametz Wood

2 Mametz Village (49.99705, 2.73512)

The village of Mametz is only 200m downhill from the Dantzig Alley Cemetery on the D64.

The quiet village of Mametz is worthy of a little further investigation. At the road junction in the centre of the village is a prominent cenotaph dedicated to French troops from Mametz who lost their lives in the war. Just in front of the memorial are road signs in English and Welsh to the Welsh memorial.

Before you head off to Mametz Wood, take a moment to visit the Church (Eglise St Martin) inside which is a memorial to the Welsh 38th Division who died in the battle. It's written in three languages: English, French and Welsh, beneath a Welsh dragon and the caption 'Y Ddraig Goch Ddyry Cychwyn' (The Red Dragon leads the way). Next to it is a more recent plaque to the German soldiers who died at Mametz. Please note that the church is only open on Fridays.



Mametz village memorial and signs to the Welsh dragon memorial.



Welsh Memorial plaque in Mametz Church.

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Mametz Wood

3 Mamez Wood (50.01363, 2.75593)

Whether on foot or in a vehicle, take the clearly marked turning (Rue du Boelle, C4) and continue along this road until you turn right at a forked junction and right again at another forked junction. By this time, the road is reduced to more of a track. After about half a mile the Welsh memorial appears on a promontory on your right with Mametz Wood on your left. There is adequate parking at the memorial.

On the morning of 7 July 1916, one week on from the first day of the Battle of the Somme, two British Divisions began a pincer movement attack on Mametz Wood. The 38th (Welsh) division were attacking from the east. The German machine guns which had supposed to be suppressed by artillery barrage were still intact and inflicted huge casualties on the British troops. The attack was a failure. However, three days later, the two divisions were sent in again, this time a full frontal assault towards the southern edge of the wood and led by 13th, 14th and 16th battalions of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. After first overcoming the steep sloping ground on which the Dragon Memorial stands, the Welsh troops entered the wood despite withering German fire and after two days of bitter and often hand-to-hand fighting, the Germans withdrew. The cost was high. Almost 4,000 Welsh casualties were sustained during the capture of Mametz Wood. The Welsh Dragon looks out in the same direction as the Welsh troops who entered the wood and provides a powerful and emotional reminder of what happened one hundred years ago. **(It is important to remember that entry to the privately owned woods is strictly forbidden but there is an informal memorial on the edge of the woods 100m across the field).**



The Welsh Dragon Memorial overlooking Mametz Wood.



Poppy wreaths on the edge of Mametz Wood.

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Mametz Wood

4 Flat Iron Copse Cemetery (50.01979, 2.75844)

By continuing along the same track for a short distance, you come to Flat Iron Copse Cemetery.

Flat Iron Copse Cemetery was begun on 14 July 1916 as troops cleared Mametz Wood after its capture by the 38th Welsh Division. There are over 1,500 graves including, tragically, two pairs of brothers each serving with the Royal Welsh Fusiliers. Arthur and Leonard Tregaskis, both lieutenants, were originally from Penarth but had emigrated to Canada. They returned and joined up on the same day. They were both killed in the first attack on 7 July 1916. Thomas and Henry Hardwidge from Ferndale were married men with young children. Thomas was wounded in the attack of 11 July and when his brother, L/Cpl Henry Hardwidge went to give him water, they were both shot and killed. Later in 1916 a third Hardwidge brother was killed in France.



Flat Iron Copse cemetery.

5 Lochnagar Crater (50.01605, 2.69723)

From the D929, turn for the village of La Boisselle and follow signs for La Grande Mine. In the village turn right on to C9 to Becourt but then keep left following sign for La Grande Mine. Lochnagar Crater is situated half a mile on the right.

Mine warfare and tunnelling under enemy positions had been going on for a while – by the end of June 1916 the British had detonated 101 mines. The mine at Lochnagar had been started as far back as December 1915 and was packed with two charges of Ammonal – one weighed 24,000lbs the other a whopping 36,000lbs (almost 30 tons of explosive!).

At 07:28am (two minutes before the main attack) on the 1 July 1916, the Lochnagar Mine was detonated along with 16 other mines along the British lines. The explosion was enormous; debris rose 4,000 feet into the air and a crater was created which measured 100m across and over 30m deep. In the 1970s the site was in danger of being filled in, so Richard Dunning, a British man, bought the land and preserved it as a memorial to both the British and German soldiers who died there. It has become one of the most important places for commemorating the Battle of the Somme and in addition to the Remembrance Day ceremony there is also a gathering held on the 1 July every year at 07:28am.



Lochnagar crater, near La Boisselle.

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Mametz Wood

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Thiepval Memorial (50.05237, 2.68814)

To reach The Thiepval Memorial, turn off the D929 in the village of Pozieres on to D73. The memorial dominates the countryside as you approach and is easy to locate. Please obey parking instructions if arriving by vehicle.

Thiepval is one of the most impressive memorials throughout the World War One battlefields. It commemorates the 73,000 British and South African soldiers who fell on the Somme between July 1915 and 20 March 1918 and have no known grave (other Commonwealth troops are commemorated elsewhere in their own national memorials). The memorial arch is 146 feet high and was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and is the largest British war memorial in the world. Behind the memorial is a small Anglo-French cemetery where 300 soldiers of each nation are buried, the French graves marked by crosses, the British graves marked by their traditional headstones. At the entrance to the memorial is a small museum with artefacts from the conflict and a new audio visual display describing the events of the Battle of the Somme.



The Thiepval Memorial.