tyne cot british cemetery

overview

Tyne Cot Cemetery is the resting place of 11,954 soldiers of the Commonwealth Forces. It is the largest Commonwealth military cemetery in the world.

The graves are for soldiers who died in the Battle of Passchendaele: in October 1917 allied troops managed to seize this high ridge of land from the Germans under relentless machine gun fire and almost incessant rainfall that turned the battlefield into a swamp. They lost the land again after almost continuous fighting in March 1918.

Two German concrete pillboxes, from which many of the men buried here were machine-gunned to death, are incorporated in the cemetery; the cross of sacrifice is built directly on top of a third.

independent tasks

Take a sample of the gravestones. What percentage do you estimate are for unidentified soldiers ("known unto God") whose names therefore appear instead on the "Memorials to the Missing"?

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If the area of the cemetery was divided between all 11,954 soldiers commemorated here (not just those with gravestones), how much land would each soldier be given?

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For each step of land from the bottom of this ridge to the top, how many lives do you estimate were lost?

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notable graves

Three winners of the Victoria Cross – the highest award for military gallantry available to British Empire soldiers – are buried here.

Q. Try to locate the graves of these three men.
Q. In the bottom row of the table, include an extract from the gravestone inscription.

Captain C S Jeffries	Sergeant Lewis McGee	Private James Robertson
Plot XL, Row E, Grave 1	*Plot XX, Row D, Grave 1*	*Plot LVIII, Row D, Grave 26*
He led a team capturing four machine guns and thirty-five prisoners, then pushed forward under heavy machine-gun fire to attack another pillbox, capturing two machine guns and thirty more prisoners. He was mortally wounded during this second attack by a machine-gun bullet to the stomach.	His platoon was suffering severely from machine gun fire coming from a pillbox. Single-handed, McGee rushed the post armed only with a revolver. He shot some of the soldiers inside and captured the rest and thereby enabled his platoon to reach their objective. He was killed in battle several days later.	Robertson rushed a machine gun post, killed four of its crew and then carried the machine gun up to the top of the ridge, where he drove the Germans back by firing continuously at them. He then went out under heavy fire to rescue two soldiers in no-man's land; he was killed as he returned with the second man.
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