

BRITISH TOMMY

1914-1918



WEAPONS - ARMOUR - TACTICS

MARTIN PEGLER

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Dedication

To ex-Privates Clarrie Jarman and Fred Dixon, both now approaching their century, Will and George Wells, Frederick Mowbray and all of the other men whose experiences have provided the basis for this book.

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Artist's note

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INTRODUCTION

Until the Second World War, no event in history had produced as many strong visual images and such a volume of printed material as the First World War. Poetry, letters, unit histories, autobiographies, photographs and film - all have conspired to give a popular image of the Great War, familiar to most of us. It is one of a blasted, waterlogged landscape, populated by elegant officers and grinning mud-caked Tommies, who wave jerkily at us from sepia-tinted newsreel. In the background, the ponderous military hardware of one of the most powerful industrial nations in the world rumble along in a never-ending, silent

stream. Artillery towed by puffing steam engines, aeroplanes, motorcycles, staff cars, and tanks, contrast sharply with the horse-drawn wagons, and shell-laden mules of an earlier era, and conspire to give the impression that the war had become an inexorable Titan, grinding impartially along, with humans providing no more than a supporting role.

There is a small element of truth in this vision, but the Great War was very much a conflict of infantrymen; those troglodyte, and now largely forgotten masses of Tommies, Fritzes, and Poilus

Men of several Regular Army regiments take a meal break. They wear two different types of cap - the early flapped 'trench cap' and the smarter flat-topped forage cap'. The man second from right is dipping into the ubiquitous tin of 'Fray Bentos' corned beef' (National Army Museum)





A young soldier of the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment whose perfect turnout indicates a behind-the-lines photograph. He wears 1918-pattern webbing equipment and carries a short magazine Lee-Enfield rifle. Unusually, he wears collar badges - not a usual wartime practice. (Author's collection)

who left little record of their lives except in frozen glimpses of time caught by a camera, or the letters and diaries salted away in family collections or museum basements. Without the ordinary soldier there could have been no war, but rarely is the infantryman looked at as an individual. Armies, Corps and Divisions were comprised of thousands

of these individuals, and this book will look in detail at how the British soldier lived, fought, and died during those traumatic war years. In addition, his weapons, uniform and equipment will be examined.

Above all, it is hoped that this book will convey some idea of what life at 'the front' was like for the ordinary infantryman.

Due to limitations of space, some areas have been ignored. The campaigns in Gallipoli, Egypt and Africa are outside the scope of this book, and the role of the Regular pre-war army has been mentioned only in passing.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The First World War was a watershed in British military and social history, and even now, eighty years on, its repercussions can still be felt. Women's suffrage, the rise of the Labour movement, and an increasingly vociferous anti-military stance by politicians and populace have been the result of those years of terrible conflict. No town or village in the British Isles escaped their casualties, and the creative genius of a generation was wiped out, at an incalculable loss to society. The war started with all the drum thumping and banner waving that the Victorians had come to expect. Small colonial wars had been fought (and usually won) against generally ill-equipped and poorly led adversaries. Had they chosen to see it, the High Command could have had a chilling glimpse of the future during the Boer War, when the well-armed, and effectively led Boer commandos repeatedly ran rings around the British Army. Such lessons as could have been learned were ignored, however. The war in 1914 was viewed in traditional terms - it would be a short sharp clash, with open warfare, and much use of cavalry (still the darlings of the General Staff) resulting in a bloody nose for the Hun, and everyone home by Christmas. In practice, it all worked out rather differently.



Germany was a formidable industrial power, politically bent on colonial expansion and it posed a direct threat to British interests world-wide. Britain was as keen to protect its interests as Germany was to expand, and the will to wage war existed very strongly on both sides. Britain had not fought in a European war since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, but Germany had learned much from the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. The use, or more accurately, misuse of modern technology during that conflict had left its mark upon the minds of the Prussian generals. At the outbreak of war, they had double the number of machine guns that Britain had, as well as a prepared strategy (which fortunately was not adhered to), an understanding of the devastating power of massed artillery, and defensive capabilities of entrenched troops against attacking infantry.

The stalemate for which the war became infamous had begun by winter 1914 and lasted until spring 1918. During that time, a continuous

A group of Royal Artillerymen wearing an interesting mixture of goatskin jackets. Although warm, they were completely impractical, being smelly when wet, and becoming extremely heavy once coated in mud - the quality of which is visible on the soldiers' boots. (Imperial War Museum)

line of trenches stretched from the Belgian coast to Switzerland. Over 5 million Englishmen were in uniform, drawn from all of the social classes, and the conflict was costing Britain £7.5 million per day. Impressive though these figures are, they do not begin to convey the true cost of the war on the people of the embattled nations, for this was total warfare; for the first time civilians far removed from the front line became legitimate and defenceless targets.

Poison gas, flamethrowers, tanks, radio communications, even the indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets had all become an accepted part of warfare. By 1918 not only had the political map of Europe been changed, so too had the psychology of warfare.

CHRONOLOGY

Principal battles

Mons.	23rd August	1914
First Le Cateau.	26th August	1914
First Marne.	6th-10th September	1914
First Aisne.	3rd-28th September	1914
La Basse.	10th 31st October	1914
First Ypres.	19th October-21st November	1914
Neuve Chapelle.	10th 13th March	1915
Second Ypres.	22nd April-24th May	1915
Fromelles.	9th May	1915
Festubert.	15th—25th May	1915
Loos.	25th September-15th October	1915
First Somme.	1st July—17th November	1916
Arras.	9th April-16th May	1917
Messines.	7th-14th June	1917
Third Ypres/Passchendaele	31st July-6th November	1917
First Cambrai.	20th November-7th December	1917
Second Somme.	21st March-5th April	1918
Lys.	9th 29th April	1918
Third Aisne.	27th May-2nd June	1918
Second Marne.	15th July-4th August	1918
Amiens.	8th-12th August	1918
Bapaume.	21st—31st August	1918
Scarpe.	26th August-3rd September	1918
Epchy.	12th-18th September	1918
Second Cambrai ..	27th September-5th October	1918
Flanders.	28th September	1918
Second Le Cateau.	6th—12th October	1918
Selle.	17th-25th October	1918
Sambre.	1st—11th November	1918
Mons Recaptured.	11th November	1918
Armistice signed.	11th November	1918

ENLISTMENT

It is a fact of life that men join armies for a multitude of reasons in peacetime. However, the outbreak of war in England in 1914 provoked a huge upsurge of patriotism that to modern minds is difficult to comprehend. It is therefore possible to generalise about the reasons for enlistment with

perhaps more accuracy than would normally be acceptable.

Britain's professional army was small around 247,000 men. As casualties mounted it became clear that this was insufficient to meet the needs of a European war. The Territorial Army, formed in 1908 from the Volunteers and Yeomanry, provided a stopgap of trained manpower to reinforce the British Expeditionary Force but even this was rapidly proving insufficient. General Kitchener's call for 100,000 volunteers was met with such an overwhelming response that the War Office could not cope. From July to November 1914 253,195 men voluntarily enlisted in Great Britain. Never before had the War Office had to deal with such numbers of recruits. The problems



A nicely posed picture of a soldier wearing a 'PH helmet. Its carrying bag is visible on his hip. His clothing is typical for the front line, although his casual attitude to exposing his head would seem to indicate a particularly quiet sector. Such exposure in most front lines would invite instant sniper reprisal. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

caused were manifold, not only logistically but socially, as classes who had hitherto only ever rubbed shoulders found themselves eating, sleeping and training together.

Why did so many young men rush to join the colours at a time when the reputation of the army was still an unsavoury one?

The answer appears to lie in three root causes. Boredom, poverty and patriotism. Many veterans, like Clarrie Jarman (17th Royal West Surreys - 'The Queens') recall the excitement generated by the war, and the frustration of young men like himself stuck in futureless, poorly paid jobs: 'I was 16, and working as a sales assistant at a big hardware merchants in Woking. I earned 6 bob (30p) a week, and worked from 7 am to 7 pm six days a week. I gave most of my money to my mother. I hated being at home, and the job wasn't exciting. When the recruiting sergeants and bands came round they seemed like the most interesting thing that ever happened in Woking.' Although under age, he looked old enough to be the required 18, and enlisted with two chums in the Queens Regiment for the princely sum of 5/- (25p) a week. Tens of thousands of other young men did the same.

Poverty was a big factor. Many working-class men lived on or under the breadline, trying to support their families on minimal wages. Army doctors in 1914 noted that malnourishment was rife amongst applicants, some 44% of whom could not attain the minimum 36 in. chest size. For these men, the army offered a regular wage, better food, and some excitement. Fred Wood, an unskilled labourer from working-class Sheffield, commented that although his companions complained about the food, in the first six weeks of training he put on 8 lbs (3 kg). Like most recruits he enlisted for 'The Duration' - that is, until the war ended. His army enlistment was the best thing he ever did, he comments. 'The longer it went on, the happier I was.'

Sometimes motives were mixed. Fred Dixon, who joined the Surrey Yeomanry, spoke for many in explaining why he enlisted.

'All of us were terrified that it would all be over before we got there. We all prayed that the war would continue until we had a chance to do



This relatively late war photograph shows the right-hand British soldier wearing common winter weather clothing: trench waders, a leather jerkin over the tunic with leather equipment buckled over the top, and box respirator slung prominently in the alert position over the chest. The man to his right wears a thick non-issue scarf and heavy fingerless gloves. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

our duty.' Therein lay the clue for the third reason for joining up. Publicity about the plight of 'poor little Belgium', stories of atrocities, and the spread of 'Hun frightfulness' aroused a genuine anger in many. Men felt that it was their duty to fight, to 'do their bit' and this sense of patriotic-outrage prompted many to join up. Fred Wood recalled his feelings at the time:

'People then were very naive... we believed the newspaper reports, and one evening my chum Ginger said, "We shouldn't let them get away with it." We all agreed, so four of us went to the recruiting office and signed up. I was the only one who came back alive in 1918, though.

The procedure for enlisting was straightforward enough. Local recruitment centres were set up in Territorial Army drill halls or local town halls. Volunteers were given a basic medical examination, and if passed swore an oath of allegiance,



A Lewis gun post in an immaculate trench. Whilst the left-hand man peers through a box-periscope, his companion poses in a British warm greatcoat and trench waders. The Lewis gun sits at readiness, with boxed ammunition in the left foreground. The state of this trench is in marked contrast to that of the next illustration. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

accepted the King's shilling, and returned home to await their call-up. The minimum age was eighteen, but recruiting officers turned a blind eye to many well-built youths, as in the case of fifteen-year-old George Dawson, a railway engine cleaner, who enlisted in the 1st Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment and was serving in France at the age of sixteen, although with so many enlisting, recruiting officers could afford to be rather more choosy in 1914 than later in the war.

If there was an overwhelming surge of patriotism amongst many men, there was an equal level of disinterest amongst others. In many instances this was due to a lack of belief that the

war would last for more than a matter of weeks, but there was a strong core of pacifists who did not believe in war as a means of solving political disputes. Many were imprisoned for their beliefs, but others like George Wells opted to join the RAMC as an orderly.

'I believed then, as I still do, that there was no possible justification for killing, but I had no objection to saving lives. Many of my Quaker friends suffered because of public abuse, but I escaped all that because of being in uniform.'

Older men with settled careers and families were more reluctant to join up. They were not so swayed by lurid tales of German atrocities, and far less inclined to leave secure jobs for glory or excitement.

Many men were in jobs deemed vital for the war effort, and were refused permission to enlist. This was not a happy state of affairs for those who saw the army as a means of escape from a tedious job, and large numbers of men joined under assumed names to escape detection by irate bosses who could ill afford to lose skilled labour. Tom Setchell was a machinist making parts for engines. After two applications to his manager for permission to enlist were refused, he joined up under a false name and never went back to his old profession. He said that '... never once did I regret the choice. I ended up in the Engineers, and became a professional soldier after the war.'

By July 1915 the National Registration Act had recorded all men aged between 18 and 41, and in October of the same year the Derby Scheme created a system of short-term enlistment, with men then being placed on reserve until called up. Single men who were fit enough to serve were becoming a rare commodity by the end of 1915, so in January 1916 conscription was introduced. This meant all single men up to age 41 could be conscripted, and this was then extended to all married men later in the year. So scarce was manpower by 1918 that the age for service was increased to 51. Up until February 1916, 2,631,000 men had volunteered. Conscription increased the number by another 2,340,000.

By whatever means the government ensured that a man joined the army, there was no doubt that the world the men entered was unlike anything they had ever experienced before.

TRAINING

Recruitment

Enlisting was a relatively straightforward process providing one had plenty of patience. Huge crowds surrounded the temporary recruitment offices, with the police attempting to keep some semblance of order. For the new recruit, the process of taking the King's shilling was as much a matter of having patience as well as a good constitution and his own teeth. Once inside, a form of attestation was filled out, the biggest problem for many being the age - eighteen was the minimum. Many hopeful sixteen-year-olds were eyed speculatively by a regular sergeant and told, 'Oppit, and come back tomorrow when yer eighteen,' followed by a conspiratorial wink.

The medical examination was not detailed. A doctor would check for obvious defects, eyesight, teeth and chest. TB was still endemic amongst working-class men and any sufferers would be summarily rejected. Those considered sound of wind and limb were told to return home, where they would be given instructions in due course. Many who were rejected simply went to other recruiting stations where standards were known to be lower. Fred Wood, at 5 ft 6 in. and with a 32 - in. chest, was turned away with the suggestion he 'got a bit bigger'. He therefore went to another area in his native Sheffield and was accepted without question.

Joining instructions for training battalions arrived at varying times. Some men received them within a week, others began to think the army didn't want them at all. Most were told to report to their local training depot. Clarrie Jarman was marched straight out of the recruitment hall to Stoughton barracks, home of the Queens Regiment. The following day all the new recruits were sent by train to Purfleet in Essex, where they lived in tents from August 1914 to April 1915.

Training was designed not so much to teach the men the art of war as to toughen them. Drill, inspections, bayonet practice, manoeuvres and some musketry were all taught. For men who were urban dwellers, the constant physical



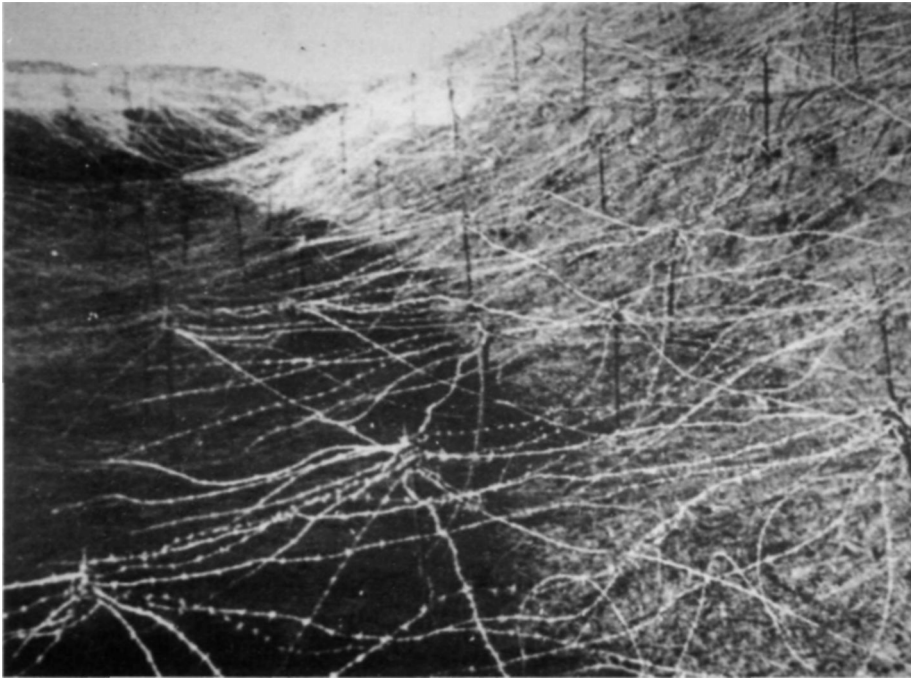
I recently constructed trench on the Somme. typical of the terrain that front-line soldiers fought and died in. This example houses a Vickers machine gun crew - the tripod and pile of empty cartridges being visible mid-centre of the photograph. A knocked-out Mk I female tank is slumped in the background. (Tank Museum, Bovington)

exercise was tough. Pte Jarman records a typical training exercise as follows:

'We marched from Colchester to Ipswich, eighteen miles, where we stayed one night, then in five days we covered 150 miles over the Suffolk moors, living rough. We arrived back at Ipswich at 10 pm. We were then roused at 11 pm and made to march all night back to Colchester.'

Logistics

The organisation of food, clothing and billeting for the new volunteers was a massive undertaking, which took some time to organise. All over the country. Kitchener's new recruits were despatched



barbed wire. A German entanglement on the Hindenberg Line; such dense masses could be 100 yards wide. Artillery bombardment served only to pile the wire into impenetrable thickets, and it was only the advent of the tank that eventually defeated it. Some success was had with Bangalore torpedoes - metal tubes packed with explosive, but they were both difficult and dangerous to use. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

to temporary billets, often miles from their training areas, and into the hands of redoubtable landladies, some of whom were less than pleased to have soldiers foisted upon them. There were wildly varying conditions dependent on area. Soldiers who joined locally raised units could find themselves treated as heroes by the populace, with free beer in the local pub and landladies who took to them as if they were their own sons. Fred Wood, by then in a Northern Cyclist Battalion, found the opposite.

'We seemed to be nobody's children. We had no uniforms, so wore a khaki armband, and had to buy our own food. Pay was very irregular, and we had to walk four miles to be on parade at 6 am. We got old Metfords [rifles] in February 1915, then spent all our time doing bayonet charges.'

With army pay of 5/- (25p), rations allowance of 14s 7d (73p) and a retainer from their old firms, usually of half their weekly wage, some recruits had never been so well off. If their finances were improved, their humour was not by army discipline and the monotonous training exercises devised before the Boer War, and rigidly adhered to as late as 1917. The concept of the machine gun was ignored, and soldiers were instructed in the art of marching in open for-

mation towards 'the enemy' with the sole intention of 'getting to grips with the bayonet'. Fred Dixon wryly commented that 'Most instructors were elderly regulars, who never heard a shot in anger. They bullied us, threatened us, but taught us nothing that was of any use in France. You learned that when you got there, if you lived long enough.' Much training consisted of endless drilling, intended to turn a man into an order-obeying machine. The more intelligent soldiers found this offensive, and some officers felt it robbed men of their initiative. This was particularly the case in the huge training camps which sprang up around the coastal regions of France. As the demand for men increased, so did the need to speed up the passage of new recruits to the front. Many of these depots became notorious for the bullying that went on, and few men had a good word to say for them.

When not drilling, fatigues were the order of the day. Men had little spare time or energy for relaxation whilst training, and bitterly resented the dozens of sometimes pointless tasks dreamed up for them by NCOs. Aside from guard and cookhouse duties, these could include polishing every conceivable article of military hardware, such as hobnails on boots, horse shoes, mess tins

and bayonet blades. Some men accepted this as part of an inevitable process, others, particularly the better educated middle-class volunteers, considered it demeaning and unnecessary. The length of time spent training varied from unit to unit. Clarrie Jarman's regiment trained from August 1914 to November 1915, although it is worth noting that it was taught nothing of any great relevance about trench warfare.

Until the early months of 1917 training followed a set pattern. Men were taught to drill, march and drill some more. Pte Jarman, then a keen athlete, quite enjoyed the physical demands of training, but was sceptical of its practical value.

'We went on route marches, cross-country runs and were drilled like guardsmen. Sometime we would have bayonet practices against a straw dummy and two or three times we went to the ranges, but that was as close to fighting training as we got. We had to learn that at the front.'

Indeed combat training was conspicuously lacking from the official manual, written as it was in the days of open warfare. Men were instructed never to lie down and seek cover when advancing, but to walk steadily towards the enemy. Even pausing to fire was frowned upon, official thinking being that given the slightest excuse men would fling their weapons away and retreat, traits which the men of the Great War rarely exhibited. The appalling casualties inflicted brought about a gradual change in thinking by the close of the Somme campaign. It had become clear to even the most wooden-headed commanders that the war could not be sustained if losses continued at the rate they were. One estimate suggested that by mid-1918 sixteen-year-old boys would have to be conscripted merely to continue the war effort at its current level. The entry of the United States proved this to be a pessimistic forecast; nevertheless, there was no doubt that lives could no longer be squandered in such a cavalier fashion. Ironically, it was the change in tactical emphasis on the part of the German army that had brought into question the relevance of the existing tactical doctrine.

Germany had evolved a system of attack using shock troops, 'Sturmtruppen', well-armed but lightly equipped units which would spearhead an

assault, striking at strongpoints, machine-gun positions and observation posts, robbing the enemy command of its defensive capability, then moving on to let infantry units clear up. Although the Allies never entirely adopted the same system, a much more flexible approach to infantry assault had become evident by 1917. Fred Mowbray, who enlisted in 1917, recounted that:

'We were taught things like advancing in short rushes and giving covering fire. As a Lewis gunner, I was told how to target pillboxes to make the Germans keep their heads down whilst the infantry went in with grenades. It all seemed very real and frightening. Not like I thought soldiering was going to be.'

The tactical doctrines of pre-1914 had to



Fatigues were an integral part of every soldier's life. Men on 'rest' frequently had to make trips to the front line carrying all manner of trench stores. These men carry screw-pickets and wire netting. The exhaustion on the face of the front soldier is quite descriptive. Note no equipment or side arms are worn, only the gas mask in its haversack. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

change, in the way that the technology of the war had changed. It was tragic that so many had died before the lessons were learned.

UNIFORM AND EQUIPMENT

For the front-line soldier, the issue uniform did not change to any great extent during the war years. The Kitchener recruits faced an acute-shortage of almost everything, and were initially issued with blue serge uniforms until supplies of khaki arrived. Once it did, the soldier could expect to live, sleep, fight and die in it. The

A remarkably cheery group of men on fatigues. Warmly clad in an assortment of jerkins, traders, scarves and gloves, the state of the road in which they stand gives some idea of conditions that had to be endured in autumn and winter. (Imperial War Museum)

service dress comprised a hip-length four-pocket tunic, with a collar that buttoned up to the neck. The trousers were loose fitting, with provision for both braces and belt to support them. They had two slant pockets and were of the same rough woollen cloth as the tunic. Worn with the issue long-legged drawers, long-sleeved vest and heavy flannel shirt it became unbearably hot in summer, as Pte. Jarman recalled.

'In summer on long route marches, the boys would be running with perspiration, and some of the new recruits, who weren't as fit as us, fainted from the heat. Even in shirtsleeve order it was hot. We wore the same uniform summer or winter.' An unofficial but popular summer modification to the trousers was to cut the legs off of them to make shorts. In fact shorts were available as an issue, but for service in hot climates only.

In addition, boots with hobnailed soles were supplied - these differed from the post-war type in being constructed without a reinforced toecap, and resembled a heavyweight civilian shoe. Puttees, arguably the most disliked piece of





uniform, took some time to master. Fred Wood was reduced to helpless laughter by the attempts of his fellows to tie the puttees neatly.

'Some chaps had them tied from ankle to knees, others wound them round and round their calves like bandages. We were saved by an older man who had served in the Boer War, who showed us the trick. They were awful things.' In subsequent trench warfare, it was found that tightly wound puttees restricted the blood flow to the feet to such an extent that trench foot and even gangrene could occur in the constant wet and muddy conditions.

Headgear was a simple soft peaked cap, which soon had its wire support removed to give it a battered 'trench cap' look. Regular Army recruits were issued the soft cap with side flaps, but these were phased out in the interests of war economy by 1915. There were two separate issues of carrying equipment available. The first was the 1908 webbing equipment, and the latter was the 1914 leather set. Most recruits seemed to have been issued initially with the 1914 pattern, but front-line units generally seemed to adopt webbing. As the war economy gathered momentum, webbing became the norm, although some units retained a mix of both types throughout. Will Wells, who arrived in France with the 'Manchesters' early in 1916, noted that:

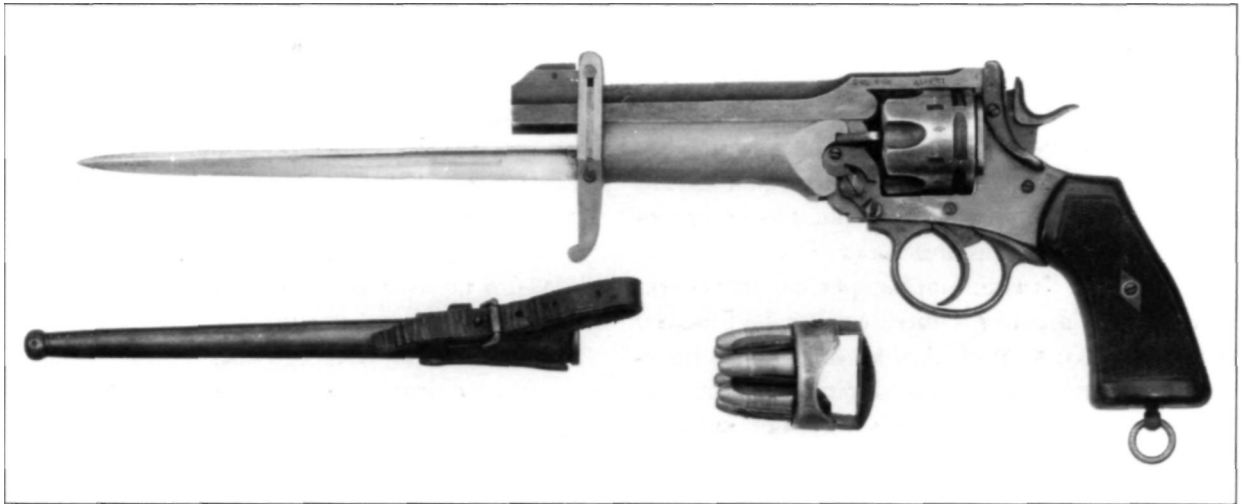
'We were told to hand in our old leather equipment, and were given salvaged sets of webbing. Mine was stiff with dried blood, and I

The upper picture shows a Mk 1 Lee-Metford rifle; the lower is a Mk 1 Short Magazine Lee-Enfield. The Metford was adopted in 1888, but was already being phased out by 1903 in favour of the new SMLE. However, shortage of weapons ensured that new recruits were often issued with Metfords, or even obsolete Martini-Henry rifles until supplies of SMLEs became available. The distinctive snub-nose on the SMLE was to permit easy fitting of the 1907-pattern sword bayonet. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

swapped it for a decent set as soon as I could.'

In addition, the men were given large and small haversacks, a set of ammunition pouches holding 150 .303 in. cartridges, an entrenching tool handle which attached to the bayonet scabbard, a mess tin, and spare sets of socks, shirt, underwear, a greatcoat, blanket, emergency rations, a blue enamelled tin water bottle and eating and shaving kit. A popular army joke featured a small boy asking his father, 'What are soldiers for?' 'To hang things on' was the reply. The latest addition to His Majesty's Army found it too true to be funny. A full set of equipment could weigh in excess of 70 lbs (32 kg) - about the same as a mediaeval suit of armour.

The most instantly recognisable symbol of the British Tommy was, of course, the steel helmet. These were issued on a trial basis late in 1915, and were officially referred to as 'Shrapnel helmets'. So effective were they in preventing fatal head wounds (a reduction of 80% was calculated) that full-scale production was authorised, and by the end of the war over 7.5 million had been



A Mk VI Webley revolver, with the curious Prilchard-Greener trench bayonet. The Webley was a sound design, well-liked by soldiers, which is more than could be said for the bayonet. It was a good idea in theory, but failed to catch on in practice. Also illustrated is a Prideaux speed loading device. It held six .455 in cartridges in spring clips, enabling the chambers to be refilled almost instantly. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

manufactured. Initially, many soldiers found them irritating:

'I had worn a soft hat since the start [of the war] and the steel helmet felt like a lump of lead on my head. I hated it until a lump of shrapnel knocked me senseless at Cambrai. It saved my life, and I regarded it with some fondness afterwards.' (J. Dalton, Tank Corps.) Experienced soldiers invariably tucked the chinstrap behind their necks or over the brim, to prevent choking or a broken neck in the event of shell blast or a hard blow from a projectile.

Another vital piece of headgear was that potent symbol of the war, the gas mask. Early lachrymatory and sternutatory gases had the same effect as tear gas, although they rarely proved fatal. Primitive masks were simply cotton wool pads soaked in neutralising chemicals, or urine if no chemical was available!

The later types, vesicants, caused blistering and the most common of these was mustard gas which attacked any part of the body that was moist, causing severe blistering. A new mask was devised, called the 'PH helmet'. It was a cloth

hood with eye pieces and a chemical filter breathing tube. It was effective, but hot and uncomfortable to wear. In late 1916 the box respirator was introduced. This was a rubberised mask with a long tube attached to a chemical filtration unit. Jim Marshall had reason to be grateful for his. Whilst carrying his Vickers into position at Arras, his team came under sudden bombardment.

'Our sergeant noticed that some shells were not exploding, and called, "Gas, gas!" We dropped everything and pulled our masks on, but not before we had taken a whiff of it. I was coughing something terrible, but daren't take the mask off. We had to lug the guns into position, mount them and stand at readiness all with the masks on. It was a couple of hours later that an officer came up and asked why we still had our masks on, as the all clear had been sounded ages before. Our sergeant felt a right fool, but we reckoned better safe than sorry. We was all frightened of gas.' Once an effective means of combating gas had been introduced its use as a practical weapon diminished, but it still exacted a steady toll of casualties throughout the war.

As with any army on a period of long active service, issue clothing was modified, adapted or discarded according to need and conditions. The strict dress regulations that were adhered to in 1914 - polished buttons and boots, daily shaving, early morning parades - had all but vanished by 1917. It became clear that the service clothing was

deficient in some respects. Greatcoats were not waterproof, and once weighted down with rain and mud soon became unwearable. Boots and puttees were impractical in sodden trenches, and the tunic was not warm enough in winter. Men often added their own clothing sent out from home, or purchased locally, and most wore home-made sweaters, scarves and socks. The problem of warm clothing that did not hamper movement was looked at by the War Office, who in 1915 issued goatskin jerkins. Pte. Dalton, initially sent to Flanders with the Royal Marines, noted that although '...they were quite warm, they stank to



A major logistical problem was ensuring that hot food and water were delivered to front-line units, many of whom were unable to light fires or obtain unpolluted water. This soldier carries a water canister, in addition to his full equipment. Taking such a load through darkened, muddy trenches was a considerable physical effort. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

high heaven when they were wet, and soon became clogged with mud'. In late 1916, a sleeveless leather jerkin with a blanket lining was issued. This proved both comfortable and durable, and remained in service until the end of World War Two. For wet weather there was a rubberised cape that could be worn as a poncho. Although hot to wear, it was genuinely waterproof, and could also be used as groundsheet, or attached to another to form a small tent.

Protection for the legs was more difficult. Wrapping empty sandbags around calves and thighs gave additional warmth and to a certain extent protected against the mud. Thigh-length waders became an important part of trench clothing. These were issued as fixed stores, and would be inherited by each battalion upon taking over a new trench. They were only effective up to a point, as Harry Wood experienced.

'On our way we passed a man stuck to his waist in a drainage sump. We gathered round and got some trench timbers under his arms to give him support. We pulled him out eventually but he left behind his waders, boots and trousers. He was so exhausted he had to be stretchered to an aid post.' There was less latitude with headgear, particularly in view of the necessity of wearing a steel helmet for protection. In winter, a cap comforter was often worn underneath. This was a simple woollen tube about 20 in. (510 mm) long which doubled as a hat or scarf. Soft caps were invariably worn out of the line, and a '1914 man' could, in later war years, be spotted by his old style hat, with its folding earflaps.

Many tests were carried out with bulletproof waistcoats, and a number of types were privately purchased. Examples such as Dayfield, BEF, Wilkinson and Pullman were a few of those available. In 1917 the FOB (Experimental Ordnance Board) was issued officially on a limited basis. Like most of its type it was heavy at 9.5 lbs (4.3 kg) and hot to wear, but it could stop a service .455 pistol bullet, or a rifle round providing it was not travelling at more than 1,000 fps, about one third of its initial velocity.

On the whole, British clothing was solidly made and there were few shortages, which, considering the number of men to be clothed, is quite

remarkable. Some of the logistical statistics are quite mind numbing. For example 45,351,488 pairs of boots and 137,224,141 pairs of socks were supplied in four years! It is worth noting that few soldiers were ever seen wearing items of pilfered German clothing, whereas by 1917, British boots, greatcoats and groundsheets had become prized booty amongst German troops.

WEAPONS

The rifle

The outbreak of war saw the British infantryman equipped with arguably the best rifle in military service - the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE). Many Regular Army soldiers had been issued with the old Long Lee - the Mk 1 Enfield. Although a fine rifle, it was complex and expensive to manufacture, as well as being too long for issue to mounted units.

With the introduction of the SMLE in 1903 Britain became the first major power to abandon the idea of issuing carbines to cavalry units and rifles to infantry. The SMLE was issued to both. It was shorter and lighter than any other current service rifle of the time and usefully, as it turned out, was easier to wield than the Mauser in the close confines of a trench.

It took some skill to master, and most young recruits developed a healthy respect for the recoil, as Fred Dixon remembered:

'We were taken to the ranges in Colchester and issued with 25 rounds of .303 [ammunition]. The instructor went through the safety routine, then told us to fire ten rounds aimed. I didn't hold the butt tight enough into my shoulder, and when I pulled the trigger I was sure I'd broken my collar bone. Firing the rest was agony, and I was black and blue for a week after.'

Many soldiers were shipped to France having barely mastered the art of shooting, and the prowess in arms of the Regular Army was waning by 1916. For trench fighting, the rifle was really not the most practical weapon, particularly when 22 in. of bayonet was attached to it. It was,



A carrying party working their way through a trench. The front two men carry food or water containers. Of particular interest are the details of the trench - overhead cables designed to snag the unwary, whilst in the background are slacked four signal rockets. Notice also the carefully wrapped rifle of the man second from the right. Sandbags, socks or old uniform were employed to keep the mechanism and the barrel mud-free. All the men have sandbag covers over their shrapnel helmets.

(Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

however, extremely powerful, the bullet being capable of penetrating 18 in. (457 mm) of oak, 36 in. (914 mm) of earth-packed sandbags, as well as a double thickness of housebricks at 200 yards (185m). In skilled hands, hits at 1,000 yards (925 m) were quite feasible, the bullet having an extreme aimed range of over double that distance.

Pistols, hand grenades and trench clubs For close combat work, infantrymen often obtained pistols (captured German Lugers were a great favourite), particularly when patrols or trench raiding were called for. Although not

officially issued to infantrymen, revolvers were carried by specialists, such as machine gunners, despatch riders, tank crew and Royal Engineers.

The three most commonly issued types were all in service .455 in. calibre, and comprised the Mk V or VI Webley, Colt New Service, and Smith and Wesson Hand Ejector. All were difficult to shoot well without considerable practice, although the heavy bullets were effective. Perhaps the skill required to master the rifle and pistol were one of the reasons for the popularity of the hand grenade, more of which were issued than any other form of weapon. Over 61 million were produced, of which the most effective type was the No. 5 Mk 1, commonly known as 'the Mills bomb'. It had a simple spring-actuated fuse mechanism, and could be thrown quite accurately to about 50 yards. It relied upon the spread of fragments to kill, although contrary to popular belief, it did not break up into the segmented chunks that can be seen on its outer surface. These were simply to provide grip in wet or

muddy conditions. Corporal James Allsop testified to the efficiency of the Mills on a raid in June 1916.

'We had to get prisoners, so we had a big "do" set up. I was one of the mopping up party, to make sure the Jerries didn't come out of their dugouts behind us. Well, we put up a barricade in the [German] trench and as our chaps headed back with prisoners, Jerry came at us. We couldn't hold them back, and they brought a Maxim up, so I lobbed a bomb and ducked behind the traverse. When the smoke cleared there were six Jerries on the ground. The rest hid, they wouldn't argue with a Mills.'

Home-made and issue trench clubs were also

Often criticised for their failure to provide cooked food on demand, company cooks had an unenviable task. Working in the open with primitive equipment and inadequate supplies of fuel they were expected to provide meals for hundreds of men, at any time of day or night. Here, cooks have decanted hot food into insulated canisters which will be carried to front-line troops. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)





Bread was a staple part of the soldier's diet, and this illustration shows part of the output of a Brigade bakery. Loaves were usually shared out at one between four men, although they frequently arrived in the line crushed, soaked and inedible. Hygienic handling was low on the list of priorities. (Courtesy F. Wilkinson)

handy weapons in a fight, and came in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Entrenching tool handles with nails in, cut-down machine-gun barrels and sprung steel coshes all made an appearance. Issue clubs usually comprised a length of stout wood with a rough cast-iron head, or steel cap. All were crude, but effective enough, as were the trench knives used. Sheath knives, cut-down bayonets and a number of proprietary knives such as the Robbins punch dagger and bizarre Pritchard revolver bayonet were all carried, although little evidence exists for their being used in anger. As one wit dryly remarked of the bayonet, 'It has no place in warfare except as a candleholder, in which capacity it excels.'

Officers had abandoned their swords after 1914, but not so the cavalry, who were issued with the best sword ever adopted by the army, the Pattern 1908. Designed for thrusting, its clean lines and slim blade made it an effective weapon. Failed attempts to use cavalry against barbed wire and machine guns did not sway the High Command from their belief that the mounted service would effect a dashing breakthrough. Most ended the war as dismounted infantrymen, armed with the universal SMLE.

Machine guns

At platoon and battalion level, machine guns had begun to dominate tactics by 1915. Most were based on the Maxim design, and although reliable, they were costly to manufacture, complex to operate (it took ten intensive weeks to train a Vickers gunner) and very cumbersome. A loaded Vickers weighed about 100 lbs (45 kg) and consumed huge quantities of ammunition. In a long-range barrage, a single gun could easily fire 100,000 rounds, with some companies recording nearly a million fired rounds over a 24-hour period. Although it was extremely efficient, it was clear from early in the war that a lighter automatic-weapon was needed, and this came in the form of the American-designed Lewis gun.

The Lewis was the first effective light machine gun issued, although 'light' was a relative term, as a loaded one weighed an impressive 29 lbs (13.1 kg). With its 550 rpm cyclic rate it gave a squad of infantry the equivalent firepower of a section. Its 47-round drum magazine produced a distinctive football rattle clatter when the weapon was fired, and although it was prone to a bewildering number of stoppages (one manual lists 33) it was well liked. Fred Mowbray, a private in the King's Royal Rifle Corps, was a Lewis gunner,



and liked its solid built quality as well as the effectiveness of its firepower. His section, held up by a pillbox during the advance of 1918, called him forward to deal with the defenders. He emptied two drums through the firing slit and rushed the box. Although he had knocked out the Maxim crew inside, a second gun hidden behind the pillbox caught him with a sweeping burst. Hit across the arms and stomach by six bullets, the impact lifted him off his feet, flinging him and his gun into a shell crater. With bullets through his left hand and right elbow, his war, but not his life, was over. He was still alive because the solid steel receiver and breech assembly of the Lewis absorbed the impact of the other rounds. He had hated the weight of the Lewis, but commented wryly that 'The old Lewis gave me as much protection as a suit of armour. Mind you, it was nearly as heavy.'

Grenade launchers

The trenches were a breeding ground for weapons, many of them bordering on the bizarre. Some were designed as a response to a specific need, whilst others appear to have resulted from mental aberrations on the part of the inventor. Some, like the West bomb thrower, were theoret-

One of the great civilising influences on the British soldier serving in France or Flanders was the willingness of local people to provide food in a homely atmosphere - usually for a very modest outlay. Here an elderly French woman cooks whilst her husband reads. Three British soldiers appear to await the culinary delight with great interest. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

ically quite sound. It was no more than a small steel-framed variant of a medieval trebuchet, relying on several very strong coil springs to provide power, and fling a hand grenade several hundred yards. However, the springs proved so strong that several operators were injured when the machine fired itself before locked into position. Others flung live grenades into the parapet of their own trenches.

The problem of grenade launching was soon solved by either attaching a short rod to a Mills bomb, or fitting a steel discharger cup to the muzzle of an SMLE, both of which would safely launch a grenade.

The service rifle was often the means by which less than practical inventions were introduced to the luckless infantryman. Two ideas that were issued in some quantity offered solutions to the problem of wire cutting. One comprised a spring-loaded pair of jaws that required the rifle to be



Most men felt the loss of contact with family and friends, and many delighted in their friendship with French and Belgian families. The enduring curiosity of children was a particular delight to soldiers. Here an infantryman shares out that most coveted of souvenirs, the Pickelhaube, with a group of Belgian children. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

used as a lexer, forcing the cutting edges together and (theoretically) severing the wire. This required the hapless soldier to stand upright, unwise when in full view of the enemy. The other was a forked bar that clamped onto the rifle's muzzle, which was then pushed over the wire strand, and the trigger pulled. The bullet then cut the wire. As many belts of wire were yards deep, the amount of ammunition one man would have to expend is best left to the imagination.

Other weapons were more practical. Trench mortars, invaluable for their almost vertical trajectory, were an area in which Britain lagged behind German}. The first British pattern fired a 60 lb (27.2 kg) spherical cast-iron bomb, nicknamed the 'Toffee Apple', attached to a steel shaft. On firing, the shaft often snapped, leaving the eventual destination of the bomb uncertain, and a direct hit improbable. However, from this early design of projector emerged the highly successful Stokes mortar (illustrated in the colour plates), which in turn was the model upon which

the majority of modern mortar designs are based.

Trench warfare also showed up the deficiencies in service weapons. A rifle and bayonet were too cumbersome for trench fighting, but curiously, Britain made no attempt to produce a practical semi-automatic rifle or sub-machine gun, unlike German) and France. The US army introduced the eminently practical Model 1897 Winchester pump-action shotgun decried by the War Ministry as 'un-military'. Semi-automatic pistols did make a significant appearance, however, as mud often clogged service revolvers, an occurrence to which semi-autos were relatively impervious. In addition, they were quicker to reload, had a greater cartridge capacity, and found favour with both officers and other ranks. Jim Marshall had a rare Webley .455 in. semi-automatic. I got it from an Aussie, who had got it from a pilot. It was a lovely gun, and during the big retreat in 1918 I used it in anger several times. I modified my holster to carry it, and nobody said I couldn't. The only trouble was ammunition, as it took

special .45 in. cartridges. It was very powerful, and quite accurate. I shot a Jerry machine gunner, and one of my section gave me his helmet. The bullet had gone clean through, and I measured the distance afterwards at 45 yards."

Many of the lessons learned about infantry weapons were forgotten afterwards. When Will Wells joined the Home Guard in 1940 he was bemused to be issued with a 1916 dated SMLE. 'I asked if we had any tommy guns and was told, "We didn't need them in the last war and won't in this one".'

a rumble in the distance, which was the artillery. We marched to Dornancourt and went into the line for the first time. The bullets whizzed and cracked, and made us duck. The shells whined overhead, but we learned quickly when to take cover and when not to.' The trenches varied greatly in construction and comfort. In Belgium, the high water table prevented deep trenches being dug, so breastworks of sandbags with wooden retaining supports were constructed. In France the chalky soil lent itself well to deep trenches, with high parapets built up with sandbags giving some cover against sniping. Deep dugouts gave protection to HQs and resting soldiers, and during heavy bombardments. However, for most a 'funk hole' scraped into the facing wall of the trench, and lined with rubber

ACTIVE SERVICE

Trench life

Few men had any real conception of the realities of life 'at the front'. For most recruits, their first taste of the war was an audible one, as Clarric Jarman recounts:

'We arrived at Amiens by train, and could hear

Religious belief played a fundamental part in the army that filled the trenches. Church services were an obligatory part of training and service life. Opportunities for devotion were not so common during active service. Services would usually be held prior to battle. Illustrated here is a drumhead service attended by a battalion of the Highland Division. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)





British troops play Americans at checkers, probably for the benefit of the camera. Pontoon, crown and anchor or poker were more likely to be played, with heavy betting on the outcome. Few British soldiers enjoyed betting against their allies. Australians, Canadians and Americans were all much higher paid and heavy losses could result in feelings running high. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

capas, was the best that could be expected. It was not the policy of the general staff to encourage British troops to make themselves too comfortable, as it was felt that it discouraged 'the offensive spirit'. The Germans had no such qualms, and built concrete-lined dugouts as deep as 60 feet (eighteen metres) beneath the ground impervious to the heaviest shelling. Trench routine was physically demanding. 'Stand to' was at dawn, where all troops would man the trench in expectation on two factors, the weather and enemy activity. Wet weather was universally hated. In Flanders, the poor drainage often forced both sides to abandon their trenches for higher ground, as water levels rose to waist height. A tacit truce was usually observed. The chalk of the

Somme clung in ten-pound balls to men's feet and exhausted even the fittest of men. Such conditions meant that a 500-yard (460 m) journey could take several hours. If the line was being shelled, or under sniper fire, then those manning the trenches were effectively trapped until nightfall. Winter conditions reduced the line to a series of sludge-filled ditches, from which there was no escape, save leave or a wound. But if winter was grim, it was more than compensated for by spring and summer. The shell-churned soil became ablaze with poppies, cornflowers and a host of other species. Larks, unaccountably still resident, would hover, trilling in the sky. Few soldiers forgot the beauty that sprang up amidst the desolation, even in the face of battle. Some never had the chance to adapt to trench life. Curiosity was a killer, and any who risked a look over the parapet seldom lived to repeat the experience. Sixteen-year-old Private George Dawson was shot in the head on his first day in the trenches, dying shortly afterwards. Until 1915 German snipers, who had learned their trade



hunting in the vast German forests, dominated the trenches, but by 1916 Britain was producing well-trained men more than capable of controlling no man's land.

Occupation of the trenches depended upon conditions. A usual tour of duty was four to seven days in the line, the same in reserve and a week at rest. At Passchendaele in 1917, torrential rain turned the ground into a bottomless swamp and 24 hours was the maximum men could stand such exposure. After major battles, particularly hard-hit units would be placed in quiet sectors, where unofficial 'live and let live' policies ensured that front-line service was not too arduous. That being so, average casualties in 'quiet' sectors would be 40 per month. There was no such thing as a safe place at the front, as Jim Marshall of the Machine Gun Corps had learned.

'We had just come out of the line, and were heading back to our billets when Jerry dropped a couple of shells in front of us. We didn't take any notice, they were always doing it, when there was an almighty roar and flash. Next thing I was lying

An Australian company on the march. The photo well illustrates the weight of equipment carried. Several men carry two small haversacks, as well as their blankets, rolled greatcoats, mess kit, webbing and other paraphernalia. An average load would be 60-70 lb.

(Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

in the road yards away. I had my tunic ripped off and the tripod [for the Vickers gun] vanished. I was completely deaf, but not hurt much. They never found two of my chums and the other died at the aid post.'

As many soldiers saw it, trench life was '90% routine and 10% terror'. The hardest thing to endure was shellfire. There were no means of retaliation for the ordinary infantryman, who had no option but to seek the deepest shelter possible and endure it. The older men held up better under fire than the young ones, whom they would try to encourage. Jim Wooley of the West Yorkshire Regiment recalled a four-hour bombardment in a dugout full of shell fumes, with dirt falling from the creaking roof timbers.

'We had a new lad, who'd not been with us



*An unusual photograph of a rifle-grenade pit. The **SMLE** rifle has a Hales grenade inserted into the barrel. An adjustable bipod permits the weapon to be fired at the required angle. Few grenade-launching rifles were used for any other purpose, as firing rodded-grenades soon ruined barrels. The practical effect of such grenades was probably minimal, although the moral effect was useful.
(Private collection)*

long. After a bit he started sobbing, and one of our chaps who had a young son moved next to him and put his arms round him. After a bit the lad began to recover. Things like that often happened.'

Trench mortars were also a feared hazard, but could be beaten. In trenches known to be targeted, a lookout would watch for the tell-tale black speck of a mortar bomb rising from the German lines. He would then blow a whistle to alert men, and if he was experienced enough shout 'Left!' or 'Right!' to indicate the direction they should run to escape the blast. The explosive effect from the bigger mortars was devastating,

and those caught in the proximity stood no chance. Fred Wood was one of a working party called to find survivors after such a detonation. Ten men were missing, but only sufficient remains were found to fill two sandbags. If the site of the mortars could be pinpointed, calls were placed to the artillery for emergency retaliation, which invariably raised a cheer from the British lines. In extreme cases, the artillery could also be called upon to deal with a persistent sniper.

For much of the time, trench life was a regime of monotonous routine with dangerous overtones. The stress of living under the constant threat of sudden death or wounding affected men in different ways. Some simply couldn't take the strain and went absent without leave.

Others found ways of disabling themselves, the most common being using a rifle to shoot themselves through the hand or foot. Some would deliberately expose an arm or shoulder above the trench to encourage a sniper's shot. Such self-inflicted wounds, if discovered, were severely dealt

A Lewis gun section take cover during the advance of 1918. They are in fighting order and have rolled groundsheets inside their haversacks. The man nearest the camera also has a full ration bag. To the left are a pair of webbing panniers for carrying Lewis gun drums. (National Army Museum)



with by the army. The soldiers themselves took a less judgmental view. Fred Wood, a sergeant by then, spoke for many.

'By 1918 those of us who had survived were sick to death of the war. We reckoned we'd done our bit, and it was up to the shirkers who'd avoided the war to have a go. I was very fatalistic by then. I didn't think I could survive, and wondered how I had managed up till then. When a chum of mine, who'd been out since 1915, reported to the MO with a bullet through the hand we knew it hadn't been an accident. But we didn't blame him at all. Many times I wished I'd had the courage to do the same.'

FOOD

Predictably, the soldier's main preoccupation was for his stomach. The official weekly rations for British soldiers in the line would have raised a cheer had it always been issued - 1½lb fresh meat or 1lb salt meat, 1lb biscuit or flour, 4oz bacon, 3oz cheese, ½lb tea, 4oz. jam, 3oz. sugar, 2oz dried or 8oz fresh vegetable, 2oz tobacco and ½

gill of rum per day. Front-line troops were frequently hungry, as rations failed to reach them through shelling or improper allocations. Pte Jarman noted that '...our main food in the line was bully stew. We shared one loaf between four men. Sometimes a ration of cheese or butter would arrive, usually when we had no bread. Tins of biscuits were always there to eat. They were like dog biscuits.'

The ubiquitous hard tack biscuit was of the colour and consistency of concrete, 3½ x 4 in. (90 x 100 mm) and could crack teeth if bitten into. When pulverised by a rifle butt and mixed with bully beef, it could be fried, or soaked overnight and mixed with currants and dried fruit and boiled into a duff. In cold weather, when no charcoal was available, it also burned satisfactorily. Some soldiers even believed that attached to an entrenching tool handle, it would make a fearsome club.

Fred Wood's opinion of the rations is largely unprintable. 'After "stand-to" we'd cook breakfast. This was usually some old bacon with bits of sandbag stuck to it, fried up in a dixie. The only things we ever had plenty of to eat was bully, biscuits and plum and apple jam. Out of the line we spent all our money on food. If the carrying



Base hospital. Care for the sick and wounded had become a matter of social concern since the Crimea. Although conditions had improved greatly, the stark, barrack-like surroundings of a military hospital are clearly illustrated here. There is no question however that the dedication of the nursing staff made up for the shortcomings of medical technology. (Private collection)

party could get through the shells, we'd have hot stew for lunch. If not it was bloody bully stew again. Sometimes we'd have Maconochie [a brand of tinned stew which was quite popular] or cheese and raw meat, [which would arrive] all mixed in the same sandbag. I never once had eggs or fresh fruit. Once I got a loaf that was all bloody, but we scraped the worst off and ate it. We were treated like beasts, and I never thought it was fair.'

The issue of a rum ration was a saving grace, especially in the winter months. At breakfast time an NCO with a large earthenware jar marked 'SRD'¹ would carefully dole out a measure to each man. It was Navy rum, not diluted, and its strength caught many unawares, leaving them watery-eyed and coughing. After a freezing night men insisted that they could feel its warmth spreading out into their fingers and toes, and if they exaggerated the physical effect, then it was certainly worth its issue for the moral one.

Also eagerly awaited were the parcels sent from home. Packed by mothers, wives, sweethearts or simply collected by local people and sent en masse, their contents were a welcome diversion from the basic rations of food. Sometimes, though, the contents were not so useful.

John Dalton once received a parcel from a schoolgirl in his home town that consisted of 'three pairs of very small socks, boiled sweets, a crushed fruit cake, a bible, a tin of vermin powder and a tract exhorting the reader to give up alcohol.' For many men at the front, parcels provided a lifeline with home, with small comforts such as tobacco, underwear, books and a host of other small items improving the life of the recipients.

Soldiers were past masters at 'scrounging' and many a meal was supplemented by fruit from nearby orchards, vegetables from garden plots, and even fresh meat if a farmer was unlucky to have an ex-butcher amongst the men billeted with him. After a Scottish battalion had left a well-stocked farm near Arras, the farmer claimed for the loss of '32 chickens and one pig'.

Officially the CO determined that they had been lost through enemy action, and his men were not responsible. Roast pork was served in the officers' mess for three days afterwards. Incidents such as this occurred throughout the front lines.

¹ Service Rations Department. Some men believed "seldom reaches destination" was more accurate.

RELAXATION AND LEAVE

Once out of the line, there were few places for soldiers to go. The most popular were the estaminets found in every village. A cross between a cafe and a pub, it was the focal point for most off-duty soldiers. Wine and beer were cheap, and 'oeufs et pommes frites' were usually available, especially in exchange for a few tins of bully beef or jam. French women were less inhibited than their British counterparts, and many fond liaisons were formed. Most of the larger towns had red light districts, but social taboos were not easily shaken off. Will Wells spoke for many when he recalled his attitude towards the 'pleasure parlours'.

'They were used by a certain sort - none of my friends would have dreamed of it, although we were curious. A lot of Australians and Canadians

went there, but they had a different upbringing and of course they were paid more.' Money was always in short supply. The majority of men allocated most of their pay to wives or parents, which left little for having a good time. The mere fact of being out of danger and in convivial company was enough to cheer up the most dour soldier. A few weak French beers added to the moment, and evenings would be spent singing, telling tall tales and being cheeky to the young girls who always seemed to inhabit the estaminets and bars.

Home leave was a rare commodity, and once every fourteen months was an average. Usually no warning was given, simply a 'chit' detailing 'seven days leave, starting immediately. Soldiers would arrive home filthy, lousy and exhausted, but it was

British troops marching through a newly liberated town in Flanders. The two central figures illustrate well the typical marching order of the late war period. Although of the same regiment, it is interesting to note that the man on the left wears 1908 webbing, whilst the man on the right has the 1914 leather equipment. (Trustees of Royal Armouries)





Grenades were particularly susceptible to poor handling. Loose safety pins could cause premature detonation, whilst rust would fuse the mechanism solid. This soldier is cleaning a small store of Mills grenades. Such reserves were often kept in a handy box by the parapet, ready for instant use should the need arise. (National Army Museum)

worth it. Fred Wood spent five days sleeping, having the luxury of a hot bath whenever he felt like it, and reading. Others enjoyed a more hectic-social life, frequently in local pubs. Married men preferred the comfort and companionship of their families, and most found leaving them to return to the front a terrible ordeal. As much as anything, the sudden removal from peace and safety to a life of death and destruction was hard to reconcile. George Wells, upon arriving back in France, commented that within two days of his return to the front line, he was embroiled in a savage and major battle.

'The life I had left behind was as remote to me as the moon, and I felt that the front was all I had ever known. Nothing else seemed real.'

This was an attitude that became more acute the longer a man served. The life of comparative safety that existed in England seemed totally unreal compared to front-line service. A soldier's friends, their shared daily experiences and constant exposure to death in a multitude of forms was the reality that mattered. It was almost impossible for a man to convey the reality of life at the front to family or friends, even if social

convention had permitted such frank discussions.

When Harry Wood was on leave and having a quiet drink in his local, a family friend came up and slapped him on the back, commenting, 'I suppose you've been having the time of your life, voting fellow.' Harry said, 'What I wanted to do was tell him what it was like to watch a man sniped in the head die, or collect up the parts of someone caught by a shell. But it just wasn't done, so I drank up and walked out.'

It was a gulf that grew wider as the war progressed, and which never closed. As one veteran said, 'Either you had been at the front, or you hadn't. That was all there was to it.'

For the vast majority of soldiers who had never before been abroad there were a multitude of attractions in the larger French towns, where the oddities of French life proved a constant source of fascination. Gates, patisseries, restaurants and souvenir shops soon exhausted carefully hoarded funds, and evenings saw groups of men in varying stages of intoxication weaving unsteadily back to outlying billets before their leave passes expired, leaving them open to a charge.

Although gambling was officially forbidden,



A splendid trooper of the Gloucestershire Yeomanry. These pre-war mounted territorial units mostly served as mobile infantrymen, frequently providing men as reinforcements for infantry battalions that had suffered heavy casualties. He wears a five-pouch, 100-round, leather bandoleer, typically issued to artillery and mounted units - a nine-pouch version was also issued. (Author's collection)

there wasn't a regiment that didn't have its resident clique of near-professional gamblers. One of the most popular games was *Crown and Anchor*, which, although discouraged, was seldom officially prohibited. Card games of all sorts were popular. Irish soldiers in particular were renowned for their willingness to bet on anything, and an oft-repeated tale tells of two men standing in the open during an intense artillery bombardment betting on when a particular landmark would be hit. When a flying splinter badly injured one, his friend insisted on carrying him back to an aid post, refusing congratulations for his bravery, insisting, if oi hadn't brought the auld devil back oi'd never've got the five bob he owes me.'

Religion was an important social factor, most men having been brought up with some form of

belief. The army catered for the major denominations, with Catholic and Anglican clerics attached to most battalions. Out of the line, church parades were compulsory, but the minority religious groups were left pretty much to their own devices. Men who entered their religion as atheist to avoid church parades usually found themselves doing extra cookhouse fatigues instead.

In the shared dangers of the line, belief was a common bond, not a division as it so often became in peacetime. It was not uncommon for prayers to be heard during lulls in particularly heavy bombardments. Thousands of men took great comfort in the facilities provided at Christian centres such as Toc H in Poperinghe, or the numerous YMCA rest rooms. Quite often they were the only place that men could relax in a civilised manner, and read or write. Tea, chocolate and food was always available at modest prices, and the dehumanising effect of the trenches could temporarily be thrown off.

DISCIPLINE

There was a strong tradition of Victorian discipline in the army of 1914. The Regular Army was used to dealing with tough men, often ex-labourers, unskilled and poorly educated. The men of the new armies were a different breed. Willing volunteers, they came from a wider social cross-section, and many were of officer material. They expected to be treated as civilised men, not cannon fodder.

Even for the best behaved soldier, it was difficult to avoid some form of punishment during the course of service, albeit for a trivial offence. During the retreat from Mons in 1914, it was declared a punishable offence to 'steal fruit from the trees of a friendly nation'.

Army regulations list 27 punishable offences, from War Treason down to False Answering. Most soldiers fell foul of the rules at some point. Pte Wood noted that 'Thieving was common, and if you had your cap or shirt pinched, well, you had to pinch another or get crimed for it.'



The difficulties of extracting casualties from the battlefield are amply illustrated in this photograph of Stretcher bearers at Passchendaele. In such conditions bearers worked in teams of eight, relieving each other at regular intervals, as exhaustion set in. The man nearest the camera is wearing shorts and sandbag wrapped puttees in an attempt to reduce the amount of mud clinging to his legs. (Imperial War Museum)

Punishments meted out depended on a number of factors - if a regiment were in the line, then minor crimes tended to be treated with less severity, but the general conduct of a soldier, and the testimony of his officer or senior NCO would count for a great deal. Many good soldiers in the line had reputations as troublemakers out of it. Pte Marshall recalled a sergeant who was regularly reduced to the ranks after picking drunken fights with the detested 'Redcaps'. Once in the line, his coolness and authority always earned him back his stripes.

Not all were so lucky. 337 men were shot during the war for offences ranging from cowardice to sleeping on duty. Less drastic was 'field punishment', which involved being tied to a

gunwheel or T-shaped frame and having to remain on public view for a set number of hours each day, no matter what the weather conditions. Although not painful, it was certainly uncomfortable and humiliating. At least one group of Australians was seen cutting loose a British soldier and threatening his guard with bayonets and bloody retribution if he were found tied up again.

The experienced NCOs took into account the strain of warfare on their men, and exercised a paternal control over them. When, after two days without rest, eighteen-year-old Jimmy Hughes dozed off when on sentry, he was shaken awake by his Company Sergeant Major, who told him, 'If Jerry came over now he'd shoot you. That's nothing compared to what I'll do if I catch you asleep again.' He then gave Hughes a sip from a flask full of rum, leaving him very much awake. Not all were so lucky. During the retreat from Mons, two guardsmen, who had not slept for five days, were found asleep on sentry. Both were court-martialed and shot.

The relationship between the men and their officers was crucial in forming efficient fighting

units. Men tended to admire 'traditional' officers, who possessed all of the upper-class public school values of their genre. Not only should they be able to command, but they should also be gentlemen. Scorn was poured upon officers who were drunkards, profane or uncaring about their men. This attitude mellowed as the war progressed, when lack of suitable officer material saw large numbers of men being promoted from the ranks. Pte Dalton (himself a pre-war volunteer who became a captain) commented that '...by 1918, soldiers would accept orders from officers that the 1914 regular would have made mincemeat of.'

It is a great credit to the selection process that so many competent officers were produced during the war. Many other ranks developed strong bonds with them, often going to extreme lengths to assist an officer in trouble. Countless medals were awarded to soldiers who risked their lives to bring 'their' officer back when wounded, even at the cost of their own lives. When Pte Marshall's captain was left wounded in a shellhole, a member of his Vickers team, never noted for his love of authority, made three attempts to locate him, having to be forcibly restrained when about to try a fourth time. Commanders realised the value of good officers, and any who showed a lack of fibre soon found themselves returned to depot or assigned to menial duties.

There were many other ways in which men could incur the wrath of the army. Contracting venereal disease was classified as a 'SIW' or self-inflicted wound, exactly the same as a man who had shot himself. Soldiers convicted of such acts could be put in prison, though some were given the option of returning to the front line, with additional fatigues when out of it, army reasoning being that they should not be spared the dangers that their comrades were facing. Some men simply fell foul of bullying NCOs and although no ex-soldiers would openly admit to participation, there are several tales of unpopular NCOs being fatally shot or simply disappearing in action in strange circumstances. Authority was no guarantee of safety. Persistent offenders would be sent to military prison - the 'glasshouse'. Renowned for their brutal discipline, the prisons took most of the toughest cases, overseen by the



Despite the heat of European summers, no special hot-weather clothing was issued. These two Royal Engineers wear both examples of tropical service tunics and issue shorts. The man on the right has a gold wound bar underneath his service chevron. (Richard Dunning)

universally detested, and feared Military Police.

As far as most men were concerned, the 'Redcaps', as the Military Police were known, existed solely to make life for the average soldier as miserable as possible. Their powers were far reaching, from being able to shoot a man found behind the lines during an attack, to putting a man on a charge for having a tunic button unfastened. The sterling work that they did in keeping clogged roads open, and directing traffic under intense shellfire was largely ignored by the rank and file, who regarded them as an unmitigated nuisance. One ex-soldier recounted the attitude of the men towards the MPs:

'A few were alright - they'd stick their heads into an estaminet and say, "We'll be coming- back in ten minutes," which gave us a chance to leave, but others would burst in and lay about us with truncheons, no warning, nothing. We never trusted them, most were blokes who were no good for front line service, and a lot were bullies. When we were drinking with the Aussies it was different, though. I saw Aussies beat a group of Redcaps so badly that they were stretcher cases. They never bothered us if we had them with us.'

COMBAT AND TACTICS

The tactics of the Great War were based on experience of colonial wars of the late nineteenth century, and the general feeling amongst the general staff that any European war would be short and sharp. The trench system that developed was anathema to the High Command, who tried the most obvious methods of overcoming it. In practical terms, this meant extended

artillery bombardment, to destroy wire and machine gun emplacements, which it conspicuously failed to do. By the time the attacking force had left their trenches the opposing lines were bristling with rifles and machine guns. Advancing British soldiers were forbidden to fire at the enemy, but were required to hold their rifles at the port (across their chests), and tackle the enemy with the bayonet. These tactics failed again and again, and many units adopted more flexible methods of attack to try to reduce casualties. It was not until 1917 that tactical doctrine began to change, with creeping barrages ahead of the infantry, tank support to deal with strongpoints, and 'mopping-up' parties to deal with enemy soldiers emerging from dugouts already by-passed by the first wave of attacking troops.

Despite the dangers, there was a familiarity about trench life that afforded the ordinary soldier a degree of comforting routine. All of this vanished once it became common knowledge that a 'big show' was in the offing. The illusion of

A motley group of off-duty soldiers, interesting mainly for the wide selection of headgear being worn, including soft caps pinned at the peak to resemble civilian cloth caps. A number of men appear to have awarded themselves German decorations! (Courtesy trustees of Royal Armouries)





Corporal, Rifle Brigade, 1914 (See text commentary for detailed captions)

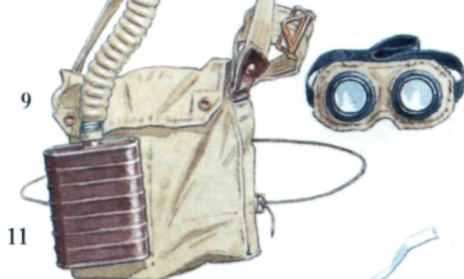


Private, 7th Northants, 1916 (See text commentary for detailed captions)

Infantry Lewis Gunner, 1917 (See text commentary for detailed captions)



Seaforth Highlander, 1918 (See text commentary for detailed captions)



12

Recruits for the 'New Armies' training in England, 1914-15





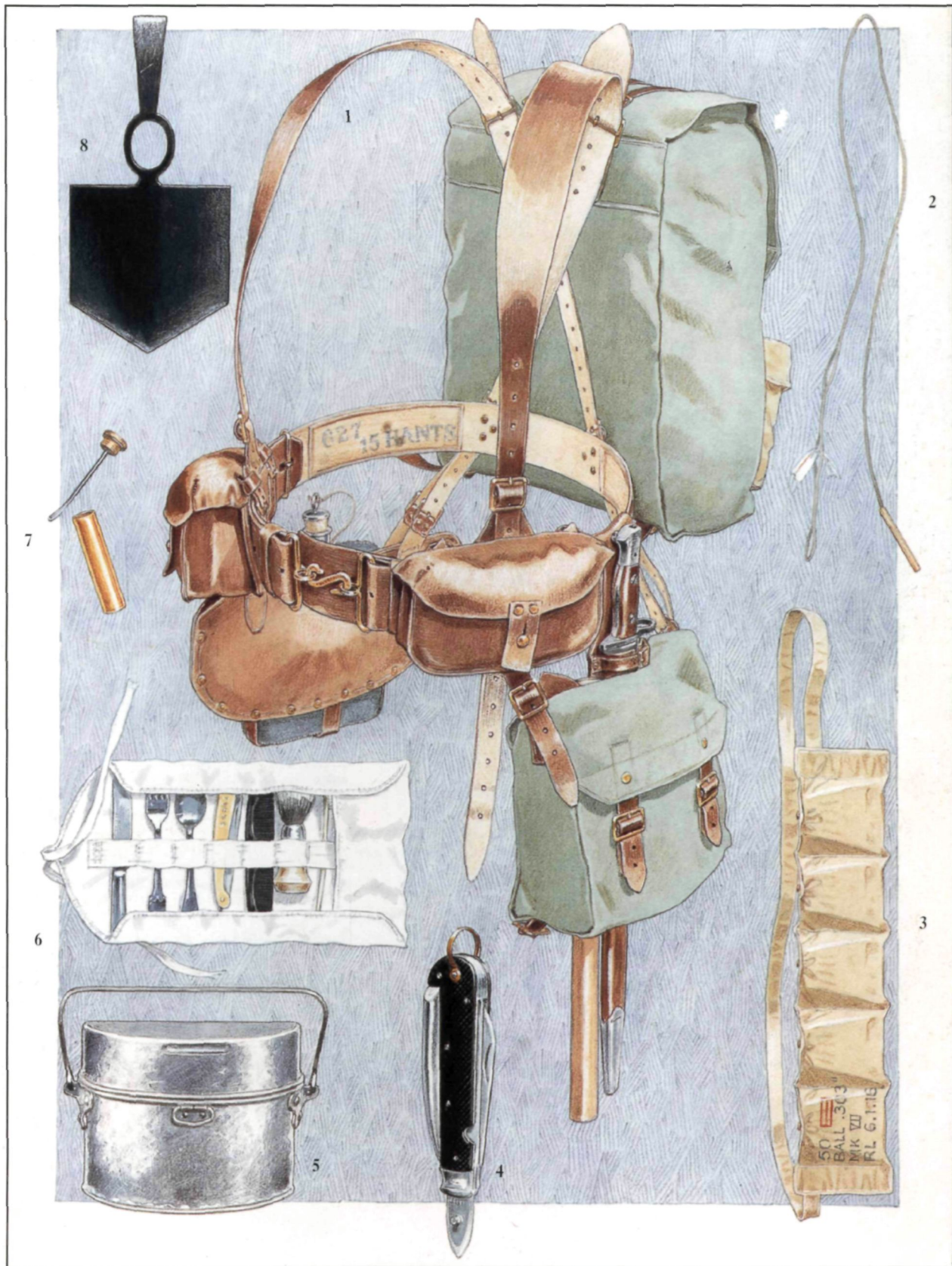
Royal Field Artillery, 1918

Vickers machine gun detachment, 1918



Roadside scene, 1918





British infantry equipment 1914-18 (See text commentary for detailed captions)





Grenades and the 3ins. 'Stokes' light mortar (See text commentary for detailed captions)



L

Armour, clubs and daggers (See text commentary for detailed captions)



security was soon shattered with the prospect of going 'over the top' as most experienced soldiers knew how capricious their chances of survival could be. Probably the worst affected were those who had never before experienced battle, as their imaginations ran riot with the terrors of the unknown that lay ahead of them. It was the waiting beforehand that was the hardest thing to come to terms with, and it affected men in different ways. Some became quiet and withdrawn, others cracked jokes to cheer their chums up. A few had premonitions about their futures, taking a friend into confidence.

Having been told his battalion, the Manchester Regiment, would be attacking the following morning, nineteen-year old Pte Wells could not sleep. 'I crawled out of my dugout and stood staring at the stars, thinking I may never see them again. We had a man in our company called Charlie, who I had become very friendly with. He'd been over since Loos, and was very experienced. Well, he came up to me and stood puffing on his pipe. He asked me if I was

A dismounted tank crew, with Lewis guns. Each man wears 1914 leather equipment, with an open-topped revolver holster. Their box respirators are worn at the alert and several have leather and chain-mail 'splash masks' hanging on their belts. There is no visible difference in uniform between the officer, seated left, and the other rank's. (Author's collection)

frightened, and I said yes. He told me about his first battle, and how he never once fired his rifle, and by the time he finished I was feeling better. He then said an odd thing, that he was sorry he hadn't got to know me earlier and it was a pity it was too late. Then he shook my hand and went.'

At the appointed hour, officers would blow their whistles, and the men would file quietly forwards, using scaling ladders to negotiate the steep parapet, usually into a hurricane of retaliatory small arms fire. Progress was slow, as the men were heavily laden - Pte Jarman carried 250 rounds of ammunition, fourteen Mills bombs in a bandoleer over his chest, pick and shovel as well as webbing, knapsack, rifle and bayonet. Once they were clear of the trench, the men theoret-



Frenetic activity of a working party. In the foreground a coil of wire is looped around steel crossbars, whilst screw pickets have been inserted ready for the wire to be threaded through. In the background a group of men are laying hardcore, possibly for a duckboard track. Apart from their steel helmets, there is little in their dress to indicate that this is a military unit. (Trustees of Royal Armouries)

ically should formate on their officers, and keep extended line, whilst walking steadily towards the enemy. In practice, no man's land was an inferno of noise and smoke, with machine gun bullets, shellfire and screams. Few men could concentrate on the task in hand, and Will Wells's experience was to remain with him for the rest of his life.

'We got into no man's land, and I followed the first line into the smoke. Everything seemed unreal - the noise was so great that it just became a constant sound, and I could see men dropping, like puppets with no strings. I wondered why they didn't keep up. I didn't recognise it then as a sign they had been shot dead. I kept close to old Charlie, and soon we were up to the wire. We were told not to bunch up, but men did which

made them easier targets. A group of men were running along, trying to find a way through the wire, and just folded up as a machine gun caught them. Charlie jumped into a shellhole and I followed. When the fire slackened I asked him if we should go back, but he was dead, hit in the head by a bullet. At dusk I crawled back to our lines. It all seemed like a bad dream, but I didn't realise until next day how close I had been to dying.'

Not all attacks were such dismal failures. Even the General Staff learned eventually that frontal assaults on heavily defended positions were doomed to failure, and by 1917 a more flexible approach was being taken to fighting. For the battle of Messines, soldiers were taken to see scale models of the areas to be attacked, as well as being briefed on tactics and objectives. This was a far cry from years previously, and was appreciated by many rank and file. Harry Wood, by then a corporal, was impressed by the planning, and more so by the execution of it.

'Before zero hour, we crawled into dead ground



in front of our trenches and lay there. When the barrage started, we got up and were in the trenches before Jerry knew what was happening. Most were too dazed by the mines to put up a fight. We left our mopping-up party behind and followed the barrage over the next [trench] and took their second line with little trouble. I had the Lewis gun and got great satisfaction from shutting up a German machine gun post that had been bothering our flank. My officer told me that I'd get an award for it, but he was killed later, and I never did.

'The worst bit was holding the trench and waiting for reinforcements. Jerry tried counter-attacking, but we beat them off. They got so close that I had to use my pistol when the Lewis was empty. I wasn't frightened at all then, but got a bit shaky when we were relieved. I was glad to come out alive.'

Generally, men were too keyed up after battle to feel much except relief at their own survival. It was only after they were sent back to reserve lines or billets that their experiences began to prey on

A motorised machine gun unit, photographed some distance behind the lines as their respirators are slung behind them. Their uniform is a curious mixture of cavalry and infantry - with cavalry breeches and leather puttees. 1908 webbing is mixed with open leather holsters, containing Mk V Webley revolvers, and leather cartridge pouches from the 1914 equipment. Several men have removed the stiffening from their caps to give them a more battered appearance. (Author's collection)

their minds. The loss of friends was particularly hard to bear, and small groups of silent men would be found wandering listlessly around.

'After roll call, I went around to see if any men I knew had come out (alive). There were almost no faces I recognised. I was really fed up and sat on my own. It seemed that the spirit of the battalion had gone with all the old faces, and I didn't think it would ever be the same. Six months later though, I was one of the "old sweats", and I realised that you can't dwell on the past, you just keep going.' (W. Wells)

The lucky ones were those able to walk out after combat. For the others, the story was different.

CASUALTIES

Britain began the war with a small but relatively well-equipped medical service, and the system of aid posts, dressing stations, field hospitals and base hospitals served the army quite well at the outset. However, as the size of field armies increased, so did the numbers involved in battles, and the campaigns of 1915 such as Neuve Chapelle and Loos saw numbers of wounded arriving at the aid stations far beyond those contemplated in 1914.

The system of dealing with casualties relied on a network of hospitals - Regimental Aid Posts behind the reserve trenches, casualty clearing

Hotchkiss gun section of the Suffolk Hussars. Arguably a better designed weapon than the Lewis, it was clip-fed with a cyclic rate of 600 rpm. The troops in the background carry Webley revolvers, and have special ammunition pouches to accommodate the Hotchkiss's hinged cartridge clips. (Author's collection)

stations behind them, field hospitals and base hospitals behind those.

The medical services had considerable experience of dealing with high-velocity gunshot wounds, based on earlier colonial campaigns. For the ordinary soldiers, exposure to the effects of such injuries was unsettling to say the least. Many men wrote home about the effects of 'explosive bullets' fired by the Germans - in fact the energy contained within a standard .303 in. or 7.92 mm bullet was awesome. At close ranges (2-300 metres) such a projectile would punch clean through a torso with little loss of power, creating exit wounds that were several inches across. Men hit in the head rarely survived, regardless of the range, as shock caused massive internal damage. Even slight wounds could be complex, as bullets often travelled along bones. One man struck in the right wrist by a bullet had it travel up his arm, deflect off his collarbone, and exit from the top of the opposite shoulder. Wounds from shells were invariably worse, with razor-sharp, jagged chunks of steel flying hundreds of yards, and lead



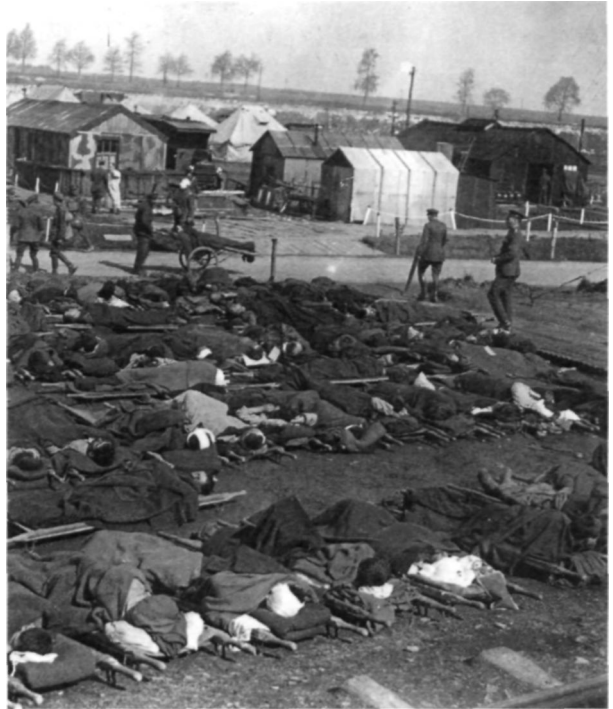
shrapnel balls peppering the ground like giant shotgun blasts.

Lightly wounded men were expected to make their own way to aid posts, whilst the more serious cases waited to be collected by the stretcher bearers, who did heroic work in trying to reach the wounded, despite being frustrated both by enemy fire and the sheer numbers involved. In the first 24 days of the Somme battle, 136,000 men became casualties, 59,000 on the first day alone, overwhelming the medical service. Clarrie Jarman was one of them:

'We went over the top at Carnoy... I had a bad gunshot wound in my right leg and was lucky to fall into a deep shellhole. The ground was covered with lads in khaki, dead, dying and wounded, and was being spattered with shrapnel, high explosive and bullets. I lay where I had fallen all day - about fourteen hours. Again, I was lucky as a lad from the RAMC happened to come my way looking for wounded... with the aid of a comrade they carried me back to the front line. After several hours I was placed on a stretcher and carried into the field dressing station, where my leg was dressed. Then I was sent to Amiens, but there were no beds, so I spent five days on the stretcher. I then went on a barge down the Somme river to Abbeville, where we got clean clothes before going by train to Boulogne. The hospital ships were so full, we had to stay on the train, and at 3 am on the 11th arrived at Aberdeen.' By that time his leg had been infected by gangrene and had to be amputated.

For an army that lived in the open, there were comparatively few minor ailments, such as colds. Fred Dixon commented that 'Considering we were mainly volunteers, and not hardened to an outdoor life, we were all very healthy. If you got a cold it was gone in a couple of days.' More problematical were illnesses such as trench foot, cuts which invariably turned septic because of infection, and sheer exhaustion from lack of sleep.

Poor diet also resulted in boils and constipation, which was also, curiously, a common side effect to being under shellfire for any period of time. A form of trench fever also manifested itself sometimes, with flu-like symptoms. Most of these ailments were treated with a few days in a field



Casualties await their turn at a dressing station. During major offensives, thousands would be packed into fields and tents, whilst overworked doctors tried to deal with the most serious cases. Many men were evacuated with their wounds still covered by field dressings, although most regarded any form of 'Blighty' wound as a godsend.

(Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

hospital followed by 'light duty' for a week or so. Bad stomach problems were common, generally caused by drinking polluted water from shellholes. Water was always in short supply, and any source was welcome, the general assumption being that if boiled it would be alright. Pte Wells, living in a trench near Delville Wood, wrote that: 'All things considered I am fine. We have been taking our water from a shellhole behind, and were surprised to find that the boot sticking out of it was still attached to a German. We are using a new hole now, but I don't suppose it makes much difference.' One serious problem was that of 'trench foot', a form of gangrene brought about by having constantly wet feet exacerbated by poor circulation. It was actually considered a crime to contract it, and an afflicted soldier could be punished. Various remedies were tried, including issuing whale oil, which was to be rubbed into the



A good illustration of typical 'funk' holes'. Such hastily excavated dugouts provided the minimum of protection from weather and high explosive. Here, two men wrapped in ground sheets rest, surrounded by the litter of war. Two of the Enfield rifles visible have issue canvas covers over their actions, the two right-hand weapons being fitted with their 1907 sword bayonets. (Imperial War Museum)

feet on a daily basis. The best solution was dry footwear, and removal of boots and puttees whenever possible, to relieve pressure on swollen feet and legs. In mud-clogged trenches, this was easier said than done.

'In Ypres, I never took my boots off for two weeks. When we came out of the line I had to cut my laces with a clasp knife, and when I got them [the boots] off the socks had rotted and my toes were black. I reported sick but I never lost any toes because the nurses were so good.' (Pte W. Wells) The problem eased with the more widespread issue of waders, and more stringent checks by medical officers, but was never entirely eradicated.

Another ineradicable problem was that of venereal disease, and medical officers could do little to prevent wholesale infection. Affected men were sent back to base hospital for treatment but even placing notorious red-light areas out of bounds could not stop the problem. On average 800 men a month were admitted to hospital with one or other form of the disease. Lectures on hygiene were given noting simple precautions that could be taken to reduce risk, most of which were

met with a barrage of ribald comments, to the discomfort of the lecturer, and amusement of the men.

A problem that the army took some time to come to terms with was shellshock. In the early days of the war victims were treated as cowards, and many were severely punished, even to the extent of being executed. However, as the frontiers of medical knowledge moved forwards, so did the acceptance that exposure to severe concussion did cause mental instability ranging from headaches and shaking to complete mental breakdown. Treating such cases was another matter, with therapy ranging from electric shock treatment to cold baths. Then, as now, recuperation tended to be very much dependent on the individual, with some men making a total recovery whilst others never did. George Wells was badly shellshocked and remained affected all his life, flinching uncontrollably at loud noises and suffering poor hearing and stuttering.

There was little that could be done for the dead except to give them a decent burial where time and circumstances permitted. Most regiments tried to ensure this was done where possible, and

bodies were wrapped in groundsheets or blankets, then placed behind the *parados*² to await removal to one of the small cemeteries that sprang up behind the lines. Burials were often attended by the dead man's comrades and presided over by the padre. Personal effects were gathered to be returned home, but useful items were usually shared out amongst friends. After Private Dawson was killed, his friend, Private Setchell, wrote a letter of condolence to the bereaved mother starting off: 'I am sorry about what happened as I was his friend. I have got his pocket knife'!

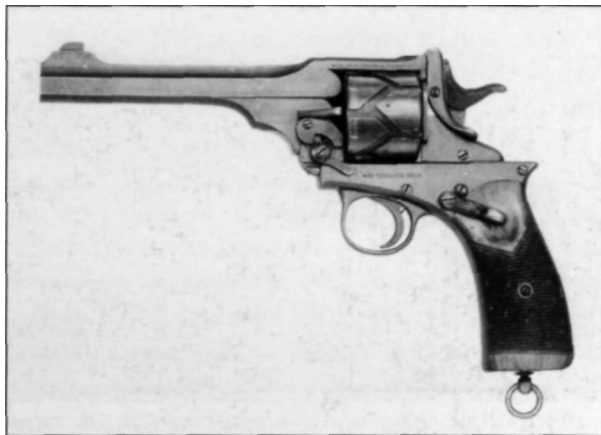
Thousands lay where they fell, to be buried later, or were hastily placed in shallow graves marked with a rifle and steel helmet, their sites lost in later fighting. Many were simply never found. Buried in dugouts, or vaporised by high explosive, they merely became names added to the growing list of 'missing presumed killed'. The many monuments to the missing which dot the countryside in Fiance and Flanders are mute testament to them.

ON CAMPAIGN

There was a depressing similarity about the conduct of most of the major battles of the Great War. From the onset of trench warfare in 1915 to the final breakthrough in 1918, gains were measured in hundreds of yards and tens of thousands of casualties. Much of the ground won was abandoned within a matter of weeks by determined counter attacks aided by inadequate staff planning and insufficient resources.

Although the battles of the Somme, which began in July 1916, are often taken as typical of combat on the Western Front, they were significant only for the huge numbers of casualties and the amount of ordnance that they absorbed.

Arguably one could say the most important campaign was Cambrai, for although it did not achieve any lasting gain in terms of territory, it proved that there was a viable alternative to the



The Webley Fosbery self-cocking revolver. Based on the issue Webley pistol, this ingenious design used the recoil from the cartridge to recock the action, by sliding the whole barrel and cylinder assembly to the rear. Although well made, it was too expensive and the mechanism too easily jammed for it to prove successful in trench warfare. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)

endless and futile blood letting of trench warfare.

The planning and operation of the Cambrai battle was witnessed by two brothers, George and William Wells, one in the RAMC, the other in the Manchesters, who between them left behind an interesting record of the battle from the ordinary soldier's viewpoint.

The tactics of Cambrai were dictated by the staff of the Tank Corps, who had been begging for a chance to prove what tanks were capable of given the right ground, and sound planning. The concept of the battle was simple - a lightning attack along an extended front by tanks, with a creeping artillery barrage and the infantry in close support. There was to be no preliminary bombardment, always a giveaway of a forthcoming attack. The infantry involved included Private William Wells, who had already survived the slaughter of Passchendaele. Planning for Cambrai was, to him, something of a revelation.

'We knew that something big was up, as we had been withdrawn from the line and put into reserve. One day we were told by our officer that we were going to take part in a surprise attack. This was a revelation, I can tell you. We had never known anything about our objectives before, other than the place we climbed out of the

² The rear wall of the trench.



The Pattern 1914 rifle was based on the Mauser action, and originally chambered for a .276 in. (7 mm) cartridge, an extremely powerful round. The demands of war in 1914 showed the difficulties of mass producing the SMLE. The P14 was easier and cheaper to make and was rapidly converted to .303 in. Fitted with a telescopic sight, it made an excellent sniping rifle. (Trustees of Royal Armouries)



Mk 1 .455 in. Webley semi-automatic pistol. The only one of its type officially adopted by British forces, it was well designed although awkward to use. It was issued in considerable numbers to the Royal Navy, and in lesser quantities to the Royal Flying Corps. Some were privately purchased, and carried by infantry officers. (Trustees of Royal Armouries)

trenches. We saw a big scale model of the line, and were told how the tanks would go in first. A lot of us were able to look into the tanks afterwards, and some of our officers had rides in them, which not many appreciated.'

A major factor in the planning of the battle was that of surprise. There was to be no preliminary barrage, and 378 combat tanks would advance on a six-mile front, working in groups of three each carrying a ten-ton fascine to fill the German trench which was too wide to permit a tank to cross unaided. The infantry were to advance close behind, and as the tanks worked up and down the enemy lines they would rush the defenders with little opposition. Will Wells was naturally sceptical, having experienced the opposition from the Germans at Ypres despite being assured that the artillery would have destroyed the enemy trenches. 'I knew that Jerry was a tough fighter, and most of us reckoned it would be another Ypres. We didn't reckon much to the chances of the tanks.' On the night of 19th November 1917, he and his comrades were marched up to the front line near Flesquières, and issued with extra ammunition. He had been appointed runner, with instructions to stay close to his company commander. He promptly ditched most of his ammunition and grenades. 'If I was a runner, I reckoned the last thing I wanted was to carry an extra 10 lb of ammo.' They then settled down to wait for dawn.

In a front line aid post, George Wells had spent hours checking and double checking his medical supplies, stacking dozens of stretchers and hundreds of field dressings. Having served since 1915, he was under no illusions what the following day would bring. 'When there was a big battle on, we simply couldn't stop to rest. I was used to being on my feet for two days without a break. I was used to the awful sights by then, and

could tell quite quickly who was worth saving and who was not.'

At dawn on 20th November, the tanks started into no man's land as a deluge of shells crashed onto the German lines. As they lurched off into the early mist, the infantry rose stiffly, slightly fortified by an early issue of rum, and clambered over the parapet. For Pte Wells, it proved an unusual experience.

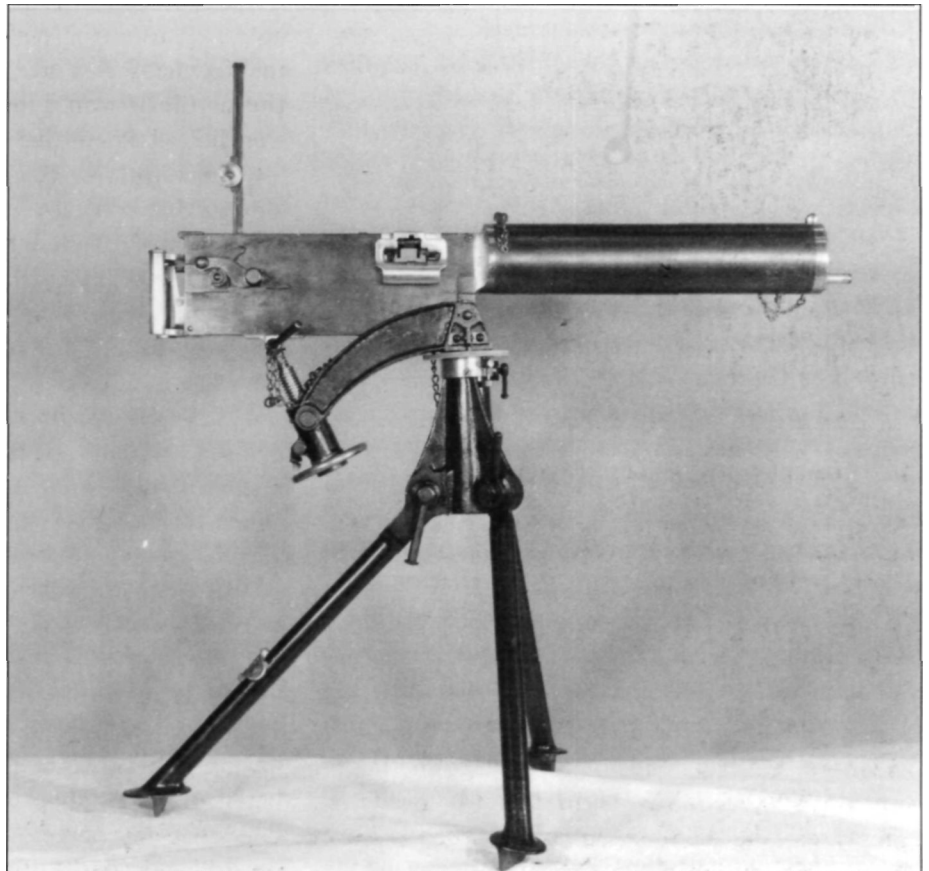
'There was no retaliation from Jerry, and I kept thinking, "any minute, those guns will open up," but they didn't. They [tanks] had simply crushed the wire flat. We just walked over it like it wasn't there, with almost no opposition.'

The first wave of British troops swept over the German front line, meeting only dazed German soldiers who soon surrendered. The British artillery barrage continued to move ahead of the advancing troops, forcing the defenders into cover until their attackers were on top of them. Opposition began to stiffen as return shellfire

found targets with the crawling tanks, and German machine gun crews braved the shells to set up their guns. Pte Wells found himself and his officer pinned down in the German second line. 'We had lost contact with our company. I think a lot were still in the front trench. My officer pulled out a pad and scribbled a message, saying to me, "Give this to the first tank you can find," and off I went. It was quite clear by then, and I could see where the tanks were from the shells bursting around them. I got near one and realised it was burning so I made for another. I used my rifle **butt** to bang on the door and attract their attention. When a crewman stuck his head out I gave him the note, and ran back to the trench. I thought being near tanks was too unhealthy. When I got back my company had moved on, so I joined with another.'

Meanwhile the battle moved ahead with incredible speed. In the space of 24 hours a salient five miles deep had been driven into the German

An early .303 in. Vickers-Maxim. Its brass and gunmetal body was too expensive for wartime production, and it was replaced in 1915 by the lighter and cheaper Vickers Mk 1. Throughout the war, Germany continued to use an almost identical variant of the Vickers-Maxim. (Courtesy Trustees of Royal Armouries)





A happy group of pre-war soldiers of the Kings Royal Rifle Corps, undertaking many of their daily chores - boot cleaning, crockery washing and drum polishing. The man at the far left sports the unpopular sidecap, which by 1914 was only issued to recruits. (Author)

lines across a seven-mile front. Initial casualties, 1,500 men, were about one three-hundredth of what would normally have been expected for such gains. For George Wells in the aid post it was a puzzling time. 'Casualties started trickling back, but only in small numbers. They kept telling us how Jerry had upped sticks and left his trenches, but I didn't believe them. We kept saying that any moment the real works would begin, but it didn't.'

Unbeknown to him, his brother was in the thick of the fighting. Having" pushed beyond the trenches into open country, his battalion was running short of ammunition and had dug in overnight. Meanwhile German retaliation had begun.

'We could see a big wood away to our front, and the Jerries could see us. A couple of times one of their aircraft flew low over us, firing its

machine guns. Then their artillery started up. We couldn't do much about it, but a while later it stopped suddenly, and we saw a mass of troops heading towards us. We let fly, and our Lewis guns stopped them, but after a bit we were told they were flanking us, so we started to fall back. On both sides of me, my chums were hit but we couldn't stop. One kept trying to crawl after us, and eventually I lost sight of him.'

The success of the battle was to be short-lived, however. General Byng had insufficient reserves to support the advance, and German counter-attacks soon pushed the British line back. At the end of the day casualties and prisoners on each side were about equal, and no permanent gains had been made.

By then calls for stretcher bearers ensured George Wells was fully occupied in the front line and beyond, collecting wounded, but it was to be his last battle.

'On the second day we had an officer from the Tanks in, who was very worried about his crew, who he had left near their vehicle. He was badly

wounded in the arm and hip, but insisted we went back with him to find them. Four of us followed him, and after some trouble found two of them in a shellhole. The tank was just twisted metal. I don't know how they survived, but we gave them morphine and dressed their wounds. As we were heading back I saw a flash, and then something blew me off my feet. That was the last I knew till I came to in base hospital.'

Having survived a near direct hit from an artillery shell, Pte Wells suffered from bad shellshock, which resulted in his being invalided out of the army in 1918.

If not an unqualified success, Cambrai paved the way for a more flexible form of warfare, doing away with wasteful preliminary bombardments (which mainly served to warn of impending attack) and relying on increased use of mechanised units working in close co-operation with infantry and artillery.

The problem of supply had been addressed by the novel use of 98 supply tanks, hauling sledges full of ammunition, water and supplies, saving thousands of infantry man-hours. More importantly, it proved that the two greatest stumbling blocks - wire and trenches - were no longer a barrier to a successful advance. At last the stalemate had been broken.

VISITING THE BATTLEFIELD

In the last decade, there has been a dramatic increase in visitors to the battlefields of the Great War. There are now a number of firms specialising in visiting the Western Front, but for the visitor who prefers to wander at a more leisurely pace there are a number of places of specific interest which are worth visiting. The best way to do this is to equip yourself with one of the battlefield guides now available, some of which are listed below.

Please remember - the battlefields are mainly private property, and whilst the farmers are

incredibly tolerant, it is polite to avoid fields with crops or livestock in them. There are also huge quantities of live ammunition still in the ground. Leave it alone, for after 70 years it is dangerously unstable.

Guides

- J. Giles, *The Somme Then and Now*
Ypres Then and Now
The Western Front Then and Now
- R. Coombes, *Before Endeavours Fade*
- V. Neuberg, *A Guide to the Battlefields of the Great War*
- M. Middlebrook, *The Somme Battlefields - A Comprehensive Guide*

PLATES

A: *Corporal, Rifle Brigade, 1914*

1: The NCO depicted is a typical 'Old Contemptible' regular of the original BEF serving with the 1st battalion of his regiment in the 11th Infantry Brigade, 4th Division. He wears the 1908 pattern infantry equipment 'marching order' which contains 150 rounds of .303 in. rifle ammunition, water bottle, entrenching tool, bayonet, greatcoat, ground sheet, mess tin and rations, as well as personal items, etc. He carries a short magazine, Lee-Enfield rifle (Mark III). Note his regimental-pattern chevrons and the insignia shown in detail on the right.

These include 2: the cap badge, 3: shoulder title and 4: black button of the Rifle Brigade, and 5: the ribbons of the 1899-1902 'Boer War'. Soldiers of the BEF 6: carried a record and pay book containing a few personal details, and 7: wore identity discs (official) and bracelets (unofficial) as shown. 8: Field rations issued were carried in a ration bag and included 'bully beef and hard biscuits. An emergency 'iron ration' was carried in an oval sectioned tin. With the advent of the first gas attacks in 1915 9: the first primitive gas masks were issued which included goggles, cotton waste pads in a gauze holder, and a nose cup.



Lance Corporal Jim Marshall, Machine Gun Corps. An interesting picture for the amount of insignia shown. On his left sleeve are visible a single gold wound stripe, above which is a long service and good conduct chevron, topped with a brass-wreathed MG badge, showing him to be a qualified gunner. On his shoulder over the SCO's stripe is a cloth cross, possibly a brigade insignia. His brass shoulder titles 'I MGC' indicate Machine Gun Corps Infantry. (Author)

B: Private, 7th Northants, 1916

1: A 'Bomber' serving with a 'Kitchener' battalion, the 7th battalion, the Northamptonshire Regiment, the subject wears the 1914-pattern infantry equipment in its 'fighting' order and **2:** a 10-pocket 'waistcoat' carrier for grenades, in this case the No. 5 'Mills' grenades. Even without the pack and its contents, the additional weight of two gas equipment haversacks and ten 1½ lb grenades was considerable. Note the regimental colours stencilled on the helmet cover, the 'battle insignia' of the 24th Division indicating 73rd Infantry Brigade, 7th Northants, and 'A' Company. Below these is the badge of a 'bomber', a red flamed grenade. On his left breast is the

ribbon of the Military Medal, introduced in 1916 to reward acts of bravery. Detail at right includes from top to bottom: **3:** the wartime, all brass version of the Northants cap badge, **4:** the regimental shoulder title, **5:** the ribbon of the M.M. and **6:** the 'bombers' badge. Below these are the grenade waistcoats and **7:** the 'PH' Phenale Hexane gas helmet.

C: Infantry Lewis Gunner, 1917

1: A private soldier of the 10th Battalion (1st Gwent) South Wales Borderers, 38th (Welsh) Division, a New Army formation. He carries and operates a Lewis gun, a .303 in. gas-operated, air-cooled automatic weapon, not termed a machine gun at the time. Fed by a radial magazine containing 47 rounds of ammunition, the Lewis had a cumbersome barrel casing surrounding a complicated system of aluminium barrel cooling fins. This brought the weight of the weapon, with a full magazine, to about 30 pounds, hardly a light weapon.

His equipment is the 1914-pattern leather infantry equipment, with the pouch and holster for the .455 in. Smith and Wesson revolver and ammunition, helmet, 'small box' respirator, and at his feet, pouches and panniers for the Lewis's magazines. These would be carried by others in his section. Note the patch of the 10th S.W.B. on his helmet cover, the divisional sign of the 38th Division, the red dragon of Wales, on his left sleeve, the battalion/brigade indicator on his right sleeve, the 'L.G.' skill-at-arms badge, good conduct chevron and two wound stripes.

Detail includes (top to bottom) **2:** the cap badge of the South Wales Borderers, **3:** their shoulder title, **4:** the helmet patch of the 10th S.W.B., **5:** the Lewis gun skill-at-arms badge, **6:** the 10th S.W.B. battalion/brigade badge. Many patterns of revolver were issued to British troops from 1915 onwards. **7:** shown here with its cleaning rod, .455 in. rounds, pouch and Lanyard is the 'Pistol, O.P., No. 1 Mark F, a weapon purchased from Spain.

D: Seaforth Highlander, 1918

1: The figure depicted is a lance corporal, regimental signaller, of the 2nd battalion, Seaforth Highlanders (Ross-shire Buffs, the Duke of



Albany's), 10th Infantry Brigade, 4th Division, BEF, France, 1918. He wears the 1908-pattern webbing 'field service marching order', F.S.M.O., which by then included a respirator, steel helmet and sundry other small items. Note the MacKenzie tartan of his kilt, banner and shoulder patches, the 'Seaforth' garters, and the chevrons of appointment, good conduct and overseas service. Three gold wound stripes, signaller's crossed flags and the green patch of the 10th Brigade. He sports a leather jerkin, a waterproof rifle cover, has his kilt apron and respirator atop his pack and has the green bar of his battalion painted on his helmet. Visible is the insignia 'Qui saice Mons', distinguishing him as a veteran.

Other detail includes (top to bottom) **2**: the bonnet badge, and **3**: shoulder title of the Seaforth Highlanders, **4**: the 'ramshead' patch of the 10th Infantry Brigade, **5**: overseas service stripes from 1914-18, **6**: a wound stripe, **7**: the ribbon of the

An unusual photograph illustrating one of the more dangerous trench pastimes, setting the fuses of Stokes mortar bombs. Although not as hazardous as fusing Mills grenades, it was still a risky business, and was usually undertaken by small groups separated by sandbagged walls, to minimize the damage in the event of an explosion. (Author)

1914 Star (issued from late 1917), **8**: the 1917 pattern 'small box' respirator, **9**: haversack, **10**: nose cup, **11**: 'anti-dim' container, **12**: tear gas goggles, **13**: first-aid dressing, iodine ampoule and the shell dressing for large wounds.

E: Recruits for the 'New Armies' training in England, 1914/15

The 'Kitchener' men had to wait many months before proper uniforms and equipment became available. For weeks they drilled in their civilian clothes until the interim blue uniforms shown were issued. Our subjects wear the obsolete Slade-Wallace equipment and are armed with elderly

Lee-Metford rifles, reissued for drill purposes. They are performing bayonet exercises under the supervision of a member of the Army Gymnastics Staff. The nearest soldier has parried the instructor's training stick and directs a 'Long Point!' to the throat of the bayonet dummy. To the rear a second man performs the 'Withdraw!'.

The white patches on the sleeves of the recruits indicate the 19th Battalion, the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, a service battalion with the 30th Division, raised by Lord Derby and known as the '3rd City' or 'Liverpool Pals'. A training stick lies in the foreground. Pupils were required to parry and dodge the padded end in order to thrust their bayonets through the ring on the other end.

F: Royal Field Artillery, 1918

Bringing up ammunition to a battery of 18-pounder field guns in action. The central figure depicts a driver, R.F.A., of the divisional artillery, 51st (Highland) Division, leading a horse which is carrying eight rounds of 18-pounder ammunition. These are in a pannier thrown across a standard 1912-pattern saddle. The animal's bridle is the standard 1902 pattern, with the horse's anti-gas respirator attached.

The driver wears the service dress of a mounted soldier, steel helmet and a 'small box' respirator. Note the badge of the Royal Artillery painted on his helmet beside the divisional sign of the 51st. The latter is repeated on his sleeves in the colours of the R.A. Note also his 'R.F.A.' titles, good conduct chevron for 2-5 years' service, his two gold wound stripes, and the whips-and-spur badge for proficiency in driving. Our subject wears the ribbon of the Military Medal, a white lanyard, and the spurs of a married soldier. To the rear, mules are seen delivering ammunition to an 18-pounder gun. Note the crew working in shirt-sleeves, the dapple-camouflage paint scheme on the gun and the observing aircraft above.

G: Vickers machine gun detachment, 206th M.G. Company, 58th (21st London) Division, T.F., 1918

This team is seen here firing at 2,500 yards in support of an attack visible on the horizon. All the equipment of a Vickers in action is visible



A splendid illustration of Private A.F. Carter, 4th Middlesex Regiment, taken near Mons on 22nd August 1914. His uniform is typical of the early war period, and his Mk 1 Lee-Enfield is fitted with the early Pattern 1907 bayonet with its distinctive hooked quillon, later removed from service bayonets to prevent snagging. Surprisingly, Pte Carter survived the war. (Courtesy the Mons Museum)

including ammunition boxes, belts and cartridge cases. The 'No.2' carries the spare-parts case and an oil bottle and cleaning/clearing rod is seen in the foreground. Both men are shown wearing 'small box' respirators and 'fighting order' 1908-pattern webbing equipment. Note the divisional sign of the 58th Division, a stylised Tower of London, painted on the helmets, the violet saltire of the 206th company on the service sleeves and, just visible, on the front of the helmet the corporal 'No. 1 MGC over 'I' titles are worn on the shoulder stripes, overseas service stripes, introduced in early 1918, are worn on the right

cuff, and the corporal has the 'MG' skill-at-arms badge above his rank chevrons. The 'No.1' is armed with a .455 in. revolver, and the 'No.2' with a SMLE rifle. The 58th Division played a major role in the fighting to reclaim the ground lost to the Germans in March/April 1918, and the plate depicts a typical action of the summer of 1918.

H: Roadside scene, 1918

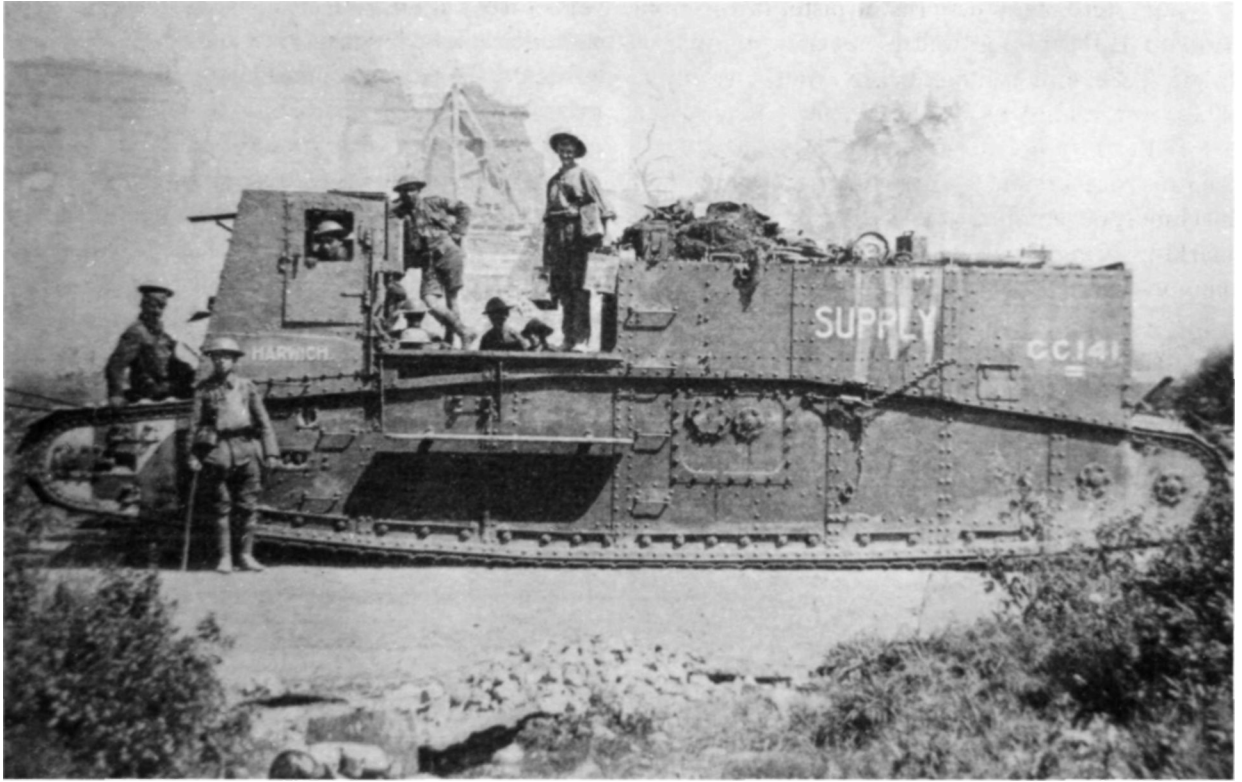
A Mark IV *male* tank of the 7th Battalion, Tank Corps, has broken down on the bank of a sunken road. Two Tank Corps staff officers are using the elevated position of the tank to observe fighting going on in the distance. Infantry line the opposite bank whilst spotting aircraft are drawing 'Archie' fire. In the foreground a corporal of the 7th Tanks converses with a 'Don R' of the divisional signal company. Royal Engineers, 25th Division. Note the red-over-green colours on the shoulder strap and painted on the helmet of the corporal, the 'T.C.' titles stitched on the sleeves, the tank crew qualification badge, badges of rank

and overseas service stripes. His equipment includes an anti-splash visor, 'small box' respirator, 1914-pattern leather equipment and a .455 in. revolver.

He wears 'canvas' overalls and carries the spanner for adjusting track tension. The machine of the despatch rider is a Model 'H' 1915 Triumph, a 550 cc motorcycle capable of a top speed of 45 m.p.h. Note the vehicle divisional sign of the 25th Division, a red-and-white chequer-board device, over the colours of a signals unit. The latter is repeated on the brassards worn by the rider. Note the red horseshoe worn on the uniform by the men of the 25th Division, and the equipment of a 'Don R', which includes goggles, gauntlets, leggings, and a .455 in. revolver in a 1914-pattern belt.

An al fresco lunch. Bottled beer and a box of sandwiches would seem to indicate a fairly quiet area of the front. The stone jar is one of the coveted issue 'SRD' rum jars, which once drained of their original contents proved far better for holding precious water than the usual petrol tins. (Courtesy Trustees of the Royal Armouries)





Technology had made a big impact on the course of the war by 1918. This tank of the 1st Gun Carrier Company is being used as a supply vehicle at Villers-Brettonneaux in 1918. It could carry within its body work and on a lowed wooden sledge the same quantity of supplies and munitions that would have required nearly a battalion of infantrymen to transport earlier in the war. (Courtesy of the Tank Museum, Bovington)

I: British Infantry equipment, 1914-18

1: The 1914-pattern leather infantry equipment, assembled in its full 'marching' configuration with the pack buckled to the back and the haversack on the left side. Each pouch contained fifty rounds of ammunition in a cotton bandoleer, and the entrenching tool was carried beneath the water bottle on the right side with its handle strapped to the bayonet on the left side. The main item carried in the pack was the greatcoat, and the mess tin in a khaki cotton case was strapped to the outside.

Other items carried included: **2:** a whipcord 'pull through' for cleaning the rifle's bore; **3:** extra ammunition carried in a cotton bandoleer; **4:** a jack-knife; **5:** mess tin; **6:** a 'holdall' for items

such as cutlery, razor, comb, leather brush, toothbrush, etc. **7:** Oil bottle (this and the 'pull through' were carried in the butt of the rifle. **8:** Matlock-head of the entrenching tool.

J: Infantry weapons, 1914-18

1: The main infantry weapon of the British army in the Great War was the 'Rifle, Short, Magazine, Lee-Enfield', the SMLE, shown with its bolt open, charger inserted, and with sling and breech cover attached. The 1907-pattern bayonet is beside it. **2:** the Number 3 rifle grenade with grenade cartridge beside it; **3:** the later Number 36 rifle grenade was fired from a discharge cup; and **4:** the Number 23 rifle grenade from a sheet steel device attached to the rifle by means of the bayonet.

Many other patterns of rifle were acquired and pressed into service from 1914 onwards. These included **5:** the Canadian Ross Mark III; **6:** the obsolete Lee-Enfield; **7:** the Japanese Arisaka Type 38; **8:** and the American manufactured P-14 shown here with a 1918-pattern telescopic sight and improvised cheek pad.

There were many patterns of pistol in use from 1914 to 1918 also, as well as several patterns, or 'Marks' of the regulation .455 in. Webley revolver. The most numerous of the Webleys was **9**: the Mark VI. **10**: base of a round for the Mark VII .303 in. ammunition, the standard service rifle and machine-gun ammunition. Note the head-stamp markings and the purple paint indicating ball ammunition.

K: Grenades and the 3 in. 'Stokes' light mortar

The British army went to war with **1**: the Number 1 grenade, which had been designed in 1908 and was almost as dangerous to the thrower as to the enemy. The shorter handle of the Mark II made the grenade somewhat safer. Note the canvas streamers intended to ensure the grenade

fell onto the percussion fuse. Demand for grenades led to designs as crude as **2**: the Number 8, made from food tins and fired by a Brock match drawn across a 'brassard' igniter. By 1917 effective designs of grenade were in mass production, and these included **3**: the Number 27 white phosphorous grenade for the production of smoke and dugout clearance, **4**: the Number 5 'Mills' grenade and **5**: the lighter Number 34 'egg' grenade. The 'Mills bomb' was the first safe and effective grenade issued to British troops, but at

For many men, the harsh reality of war was a profound shock after a childhood spent listening to tales of Victorian derring-do. Most men developed a strong sense of callousness as a form of protection against the sights they were exposed to, the memory of which, later in post-war life, could reduce them to helpless tears. (I.W.M.)



one and a half pounds could not be thrown far, placing the British at a disadvantage when encountering the German 'egg' grenade. This was remedied with the introduction of the 12oz Number 34 grenade, which was a copy of the German weapon. On munitions of this type a red band denoted an explosive filling, whilst the second band denoted the type. Green was for Amatol, and pink for Ammorial or Bellite. **6:** Typical markings on the base plug of a Number 5 grenade can be seen here.

7: The 3 in. 'Stokes' light mortar of 1915 looks remarkably similar to the designs of today. The barrel, base plate, and mounting (bipod) together weighed 113 pounds and **8:** launched a bomb weighing 10% pounds. Propellant power was provided by **9:** the 12-bore cartridge and augmenting ring charges at the base of the bomb. At its head is shown the pistol head time fuse. The maximum range of the mortar bomb with four rings was 710 yards.

L: Armour, clubs and daggers

1: Bayonet-dagger for Mk.VI Webley revolver; **2:** trench club; **3:** dagger made from ground-down German bayonet; **4:** tank mask, chain mail curtain was attached to the rings; **5:** ordnance-made dagger; **6:** trench club; **7:** push-dagger and knuckle-duster; **8:** fibre helmet for tank crews; **9:** Caltrops scattered in no man's land to spike the unwary; **10:** French 'Adrian' helmet a quantity of these were supplied to British formations before the 'Brodie' helmet became available; **11:** The 'Franco-British' curass of 1916 plate armour; **12:** loophole trench shield; **13:** MacAdam shield/shovel; **14:** the 'E.O.B.' body armour of 1917 an officially issued armour; **15:** British body armour of 1916 'Brodie' steel helmet, layered-silk 'necklet' and 'Drayfield' body shield.

FURTHER READING

There are so many published works covering the war that any selection must be subjective. To the best of the author's knowledge, all the titles listed below are currently available, mostly as reprints of the originals.

General history

- M. Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme*
- A. Simpson, *Hot Blood and Cold Steel*
The Evolution of Victory: British Battle on the Western Front
- L. MacDonald, *The Roses of No-Man's Land*
1914
1915
The Somme
They called it Passchendaele
Voices of the Great War

Personal narratives

- A. Barrie, *War Underground - The Tunnelers of the Great War*
- C. Carstairs, *A Generation Missing*
- E. Champion Vaughan, *Some Desperate Glory*
- G. Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*
- C. Douie, *The Weary Road - Recollections of an Infantry Subaltern*
- R. Graves, *Goodbye to All That*
- E. Junger, *Storm of Steel*
- F. Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die*
- S. Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*
- J. Lucy, *There's a Devil in the Drum*

Notes sur les planches en couleur

A: Caporal, Rifle Brigade, 1914. Il porte le matériel d'infanterie de modèle 1908 'ordre de route' qui contient 150 cartouches .303 pouces, une gourde, une pioche à tranchées, une baïonnette, un manteau, un tapis de sol, une gamelle et des rations ainsi que des objets personnels etc. Il porte un court fusil Lee-Enfield (Mark III) à chargeur. Les soldats du B.E.F. portaient un registre et livre de paye qui contenait quelques informations personnelles et portaient des disques (officiels) et des bracelets (non-officiels) d'identité, comme illustré ici.

B: Simple soldat, 7th Northants, 1916. Un 'Bomber' qui sert dans un bataillon 'Kitchener', le 7ème bataillon, Northamptonshire Regiment. Le sujet porte le matériel d'infanterie modèle 1914 dans son ordre 'de combat' et un porte-grenades 'gilet' à 10 poches. En dessous se trouve le badge d'un 'bomber', une grenade à flamme rouge. Le détail de droite contient, de haut en bas, la version de guerre, toute en cuivre, du badge de casque des Northants, l'épaulette régimentaire, le ruban du M.M. et le badge 'bombers'. En dessous se trouve les gilets porte-grenade et le masque à gaz 'PH' (Phenol Hexane).

C: Canonnier Lewis d'infanterie, 1917. Soldat du 10ème Bataillon (1st Gwent) South Wales Borderers, 38ème (Welsh) Division, nouvelle formation de l'armée. Son équipement est l'équipement en cuir de l'infanterie modèle 1914, avec la giberne et le boîtier du revolver Smith and Wesson .455 pouces et ses munitions, un casque, un masque 'small box' et, à ses pieds, les gibernes et paniers des chargeurs des canons Lewis. Dans le détail, on trouve (de haut en bas) le badge de casque des South Wales Borderers, leur épaulette, l'écusson de casque du 10ème S.W.B., le badge d'aptitude à l'utilisation des canons Lewis, le badge du 10ème bataillon/brigade S.W.B.

D: Seaforth Highlander, France 1918. Il porte des sangles de modèle 1908 'ordre de route de campagne'. Trois galons dorés pour blessures, les drapeaux croisés des signaleurs et l'écusson vert de la 10ème Brigade. Il porte un gilet de cuir, un protège-fusil imperméable. Son tablier de kilt et son masque sont sur son parquetage et la barre verte de son bataillon est peinte sur son casque. Parmi les autres détails, citons (de haut en bas), le badge de bonnet et l'épaulette des Seaforth Highlanders, l'écusson 'tête de bélier' de la 10ème Brigade d'infanterie, les galons de service à l'étranger 1914-1918, un galon pour blessure, la décoration de l'Etoile 1914 (distribuée à partir de fin 1917), le masque 'small box' modèle 1917, un havresac, un protège-fusil, une boîte 'anti-buée', des lunettes contre le gaz lacrymogène, un pansement de premier secours, une ampoule d'iode et un pansement coquille pour les blessures importantes.

E: Recrues des 'New Armies' à l'entraînement en Angleterre 1914/15. Nos sujets portent l'équipement Slade-Wallace obsolète et sont armés de vieux fusils Lee-Metford, redistribués pour l'exercice. Ils réalisent des exercices de baïonnette sous la supervision d'un membre du Army Gymnastics Staff. Les écussons blancs sur les manches des recrues indiquent le 19ème Bataillon, le King's (Liverpool Regiment), un bataillon de service de la 30ème Division, levé par Lord Derby et connu sous le nom du '3rd City' ou 'Liverpool Pals'. Au premier plan, on voit un bâton d'entraînement.

F: Royal Field Artillery, 1918. Arrivée des munitions sur une batterie de canons de 18 livres en pleine action. La figure centrale est un conducteur. R.F.A. de l'artillerie divisionnaire 51ème (Highland) Division, qui mène un cheval portant huit sables de munitions pour les canons 18 livres. Ils se trouvent dans un panier jeté en travers d'une selle de modèle 1912 standard. Le conducteur porte l'uniforme de service d'un soldat monté, un casque d'acier et un masque 'small box'. Notez le badge de l'Artillerie Royale peint sur son casque à côté du symbole de la 51ème division. A l'arrière plan, on voit des mulets qui livrent des munitions à un canon 18 livres. Notez l'équipage qui travaille en manches de chemise, la peinture de camouflage sur le canon et l'avion d'observation au dessus.

G: Détachement de mitraillettes Vickers 1918. Tout le matériel d'une Vickers en action est visible, y compris les boîtes de munitions, les ceintures et cartouchières. Le 'No. 2' porte les pièces détachées et une bouteille d'huile. On voit aussi une tige de nettoyage/débouchage au premier plan. Les deux hommes portent un masque 'small box' et du matériel de sanglage 'ordre de combat' de modèle 1908. Le 'No. 1' est armé d'un revolver .455 pouces et le 'No. 2' d'un fusil SMLE. La 58ème Division joua un rôle majeur dans les affrontements pour regagner le terrain perdu en faveur des Allemands en mars/avril 1918 et cette planche dépeint une action typique de l'été 1918.

H: Scène au bord de la route, 1918. Un tank Mark IV 'mâle' du 7ème Bataillon, Tank Corps, est tombé en panne sur l'accotement d'une route en renforcement. Au premier plan, un caporal du 7ème Tanks parle avec un 'Don R' de la compagnie des signaux de la division, Royal Engineers, 25ème Division. Parmi son équipement, citons une visière anti-éclaboussures, un masque 'small box', du matériel en cuir de modèle 1914 et un revolver .455 pouces. La machine du motard courrier est une Triumph modèle 'H' 1915, moto de 550 cc pouvant atteindre une vitesse maximum de 60km/h. L'équipement est celui d'un 'Dan R', dont lunettes, gants longs, jambières etc et un revolver .455 pouces dans une ceinture de modèle 1914.

I: Matériel de l'infanterie britannique 1914-1918. I: Matériel d'infanterie en cuir de modèle 1914, assemblé dans sa configuration 'marche' totale avec le paquetage bouclé sur le dos et le havresac du côté gauche. Parmi les autres

Farbtafeln

A: Unteroffizier, Scharfschützenbrigade, 1914. Der Soldat trägt den "Marschanzug" der Infanterie-Ausrüstung Modell 1908, der 150 Schuß Gewehrmunition Kal. .303, eine Feldflasche, Schanzzeug, Bajonett, Waffenrock, Zeltbahn, Kochgeschirr und Proviant beinhaltet, sowie persönliche Gegenstände usw. Er hat das Standardgewehr "Short Magazine Lee-Enfield" (Mark III) bei sich. Soldaten der B.E.F. hatten ein Bericht- und Lohneft dabei, in dem einige Angaben zur Person standen, und trugen Kennmarken (offiziell) und Armbänder (inoffiziell) wie abgebildet.

B: Gefreiter, 7th Northants, 1916. Ein "Bomber" bei einem "Kitchener"-Bataillon, dem 7. Bataillon, dem Northamptonshire Regiment, im "Kampfanzug" der Infanterie-Ausrüstung Modell 1914 und einer "Weste" mit 10 Taschen, in denen Granaten untergebracht waren. Darunter sieht man das Abzeichen eines "Bombers", eine rote Flammengranate. Die einzelnen Darstellungen auf der rechten Seite zeigen von oben nach unten: Das Mützenabzeichen von Northants, zur Kriegszeit ganz aus Messing, das Schulterabzeichen des Regiments, das Band der M.M., und das "Bomber"-Abzeichen. Darunter befinden sich die Granatenwesten und der "PH" Phenolhexan-Gashelm.

C: Lewis-Schütze der Infanterie, 1917. Gefreiter des 10. Bataillon (1st Gwent) South Wales Borderers, 38. (Welsh) Division, einem Truppenteil der "New Army". Seine Ausrüstung besteht aus der Lederausrüstung der Infanterie, Modell 1914, mit Tasche und Etui für den Smith and Wesson-Revolver Kal. .455 und Munition, Helm, "kleine" Atemschutzmaske. Zu seinen Füßen stehen Taschen und Körbe für die Magazine des Lewis. Die einzelnen Darstellungen (von oben nach unten) zeigen das Mützenabzeichen der South Wales Borderers, ihr Schulterabzeichen, das Helmbblem des 10. S.W.B., das Schützenabzeichen für das Lewis-Geschütz und das Abzeichen des 10. S.W.B. Bataillon/Brigade.

D: Seaforth Highlander, Frankreich, 1918. Der Soldat trägt die Gurtbandausrüstung des "Feldmarschanzugs", Modell 1908, F.S.M.O. Drei goldene Verwundeten-Streifen, die überkreuzten Flaggen des Melders und das grüne Abzeichen der 10. Brigade. Er ist mit einem Lederwams bekleidet, hat eine wasserdichte Gewehrhülle, sein Kiltzschurz und seine Atemschutzmaske sind auf seinem Packstück befestigt. Auf seinem Helm ist der grüne Streifen seines Bataillons aufgetragen. Die einzelnen Darstellungen zeigen (von oben nach unten): Das Mützenabzeichen und das Schulterabzeichen der Seaforth Highlanders, das "Widderkopf"-Abzeichen der 10. Infanteriebrigade, Streifen für Dienst im Ausland 1914-18, einen Verwundeten-Streifen, das Band des 1914 Star (ab Ende 1917 ausgegeben), die "kleine" Atemschutzmaske des Modells 1917, Tornister, Geschützkappe, "Anti-Beschlag"-Behälter, Tränengas-Schutzbrille, Erste Hilfe-Binde, Jodkapsel und Verbandszeug für große Wunden.

E: Rekruten für die "New Armies" bei der Ausbildung in England 1914/15. Die Abbildung zeigt Soldaten in der veralteten Slade-Wallace-Ausrüstung, bewaffnet mit älteren Lee-Metford-Gewehren, die zu Übungszwecken wieder-gegeben wurden. Die Rekruten führen unter der Aufsicht eines Mitglieds des Army Gymnastics Staff Bajonettübungen durch. Die weißen Abzeichen auf den Ärmeln der Rekruten weisen auf das 19. Bataillon hin, das King's (Liverpool Regiment) - ein Dienstbataillon bei der 30. Division, das von Lord Derby zusammengestellt wurde und als "3rd City" beziehungsweise "Liverpool Pals" bekannt war. Im Vordergrund liegt ein Übungsstock auf dem Boden.

F: Royal Field Artillery, 1918. Anlieferung von Munition für eine Batterie 18-Pfünder-Feldgeschütze im Gefecht. Die mittlere Figur stellt einen Treiber dar, R.F.A., Divisionsartillerie, 51. (Highland) Division, der ein Pferd führt, das acht Schuß 18-Pfünder-Munition trägt. Die Munition befindet sich in einem Korb, der über dem Standardsattel, Modell 1912, hängt. Der Treiber trägt den Dienstanzug eines Soldaten zu Pferde, den Stahlhelm und eine "kleine" Atemschutzmaske. Man beachte das Abzeichen der Royal Artillery auf seinem Helm neben dem Abzeichen der 51. Division. Im Hintergrund sieht man Maulesel Munition für ein 18-Pfünder-Geschütz anliefern. Man beachte, daß die Mannschaft hemdsärmelig arbeitet, die gesprenkelte Tarnbemalung auf dem Geschütz und das Beobachterflugzeug darüber.

G: Vickers Maschinengewehr-Abteilung, 1918. Die komplette Ausrüstung eines Vickers in Aktion ist sichtbar, einschließlich Munitionsschachteln, Gürtel und Partonenetuis. "Nr.2" hat den Ersatzteilkasten und ein Ölkannehen, im Vordergrund sieht man den Säuberungs-/Durchstoßstab. Beide Männer sind mit "kleinen" Atemschutzmasken und in der Gurtbandausrüstung Modell 1918 des "Kampfanzugs" abgebildet. "Nr.1" ist mit einem Revolver Kal. .455 bewaffnet, "Nr.2" mit einem SMLE-Gewehr. Die 58. Division spielte eine bedeutende Rolle beim Kampf um das Gelände, das im März/April 1918 an die Deutschen verloren wurde, und die Farbtafel zeigt ein typisches Gefecht im Sommer 1918.

H: Szene am Straßenrand, 1918. Ein "männlicher" Panzer Mark IV des 7. Bataillons, Panzerkorps, hat eine Panne am Straßenrand. Im Vordergrund unterhält sich ein Unteroffizier des 7. Panzerkorps mit einem "Don R" der Divisionsmeldekompanie, Royal Engineers, 25. Division. Seine Ausrüstung umfaßt ein Schutzschild, eine "kleine" Atemschutzmaske, Lederausrüstung Modell 1914 und einen Revolver Kal. .455. Bei dem Fahrzeug des Kuriers handelt es sich um ein Model "H" 1915 Triumph, ein Motorrad mit 550 cc

objets transportés, citons 2: un 'cure-pipe' en whipcord pour nettoyer le canon des fusils, 3: des munitions supplémentaires transportées dans une bandoulière en coton, 4: un couteau de poche, 5: une gamelle, 6: un 'holdall' pour les objets comme les couverts, un rasoir, un peigne, une brosse en cuir, une brosse à dents etc. 7: bouteille d'huile (cette bouteille ainsi que le 'cure-pipe' étaient transportés dans la crosse du fusil. 8: Tête de la pioche à tranchées.

J: Armes de l'infanterie 1914-1918. 1 Lee-Enfield* court, à chargeur, le S.M.L.E. avec la culasse ouverte, chargeur inséré et avec la bandoulière et couvre-culasse attaché. 2 Grenade à fusil Numéro 3 avec la cartouche à grenade à côté, 3 la grenade à fusil Numéro 6 plus tardive se lançait à partir d'une coupelle de lancement et 4 la grenade à fusil Numéro 23 d'un dispositif à feuille métallique attaché au fusil au moyen de la baïonnette. 5 Le Ross Mark III canadien, 6 le Lee-Enfields obsolète, 7 le Arisaka Type 38 japonais, 8 et le P-14 de fabrication américaine illustré ici avec une lunette de télescope de modèle 1918 et un appui-joue improvisé. Revolver Webley .455 pouces 9 le Mark VI, 10 base d'une cartouche du Mark VII .303 pouce, la base et fusil de service et les munitions de mitrailleuse, le fusil de service standard et les munitions de mitrailleuse.

K: Grenades et le mortier 'Stokes' 3 pouces. 1 Grenade Numéro 1, qui avait été conçue en 1908 et qui était presque aussi dangereuse pour le lanceur que pour l'ennemi. La demande en grenades déboucha sur des modèles aussi rudimentaires que 2 la Numéro 8, fabriquée à partir de boîtes de conserve et allumée au moyen d'une allumette Brook tirée sur un allumeur 'brassard'. 3 La grenade au phosphore Numéro 27, fumigène et utilisée pour le dégagement des tranchées. 4 La grenade 'Mills' Numéro 5 et 5 la grenade 'oeuf' Numéro 34, plus légère. 6 marques typiques à la base d'une grenade Numéro 5. 7 le mortier 3 pouces 'Stokes' de 1915 est remarquablement similaire aux modèles modernes. Le baril, la base et le bipied pesaient 113 livres et 8 lançait une bombe qui pesait 10 livres 3/4. La propulsion provenait de 9 la cartouche à 12 trous et de cercles à charge augmentative à la base de la bombe.

L: Armures, massues et poignards. 1 Baïonnette-poignard pour un revolver Mk VI Webley. 2 massue de tranchée, 3 poignard fabriqué à partir d'une baïonnette allemande limée, 4 masque de char - un rideau en cote de mailles était attaché aux anneaux, 5 poignard fabriqué par les services de l'équipement militaire, 6 massue de tranchée, 7 poignard à poussoir et coup-de-poing, 8 casque végétal pour les équipages des chars, 9 Chaussures-trappes 10 casque français 'Adnan' - beaucoup de ces casques furent fournis aux formations britanniques jusqu'à ce que le casque 'Brodie' devienne disponible. 11 cuirasse 'franco-britannique' de 1916 - armure en plaques de fer, 12 bouclier de meurtrières de tranchées, 13 bouclier/pelle MacAdam, 14 Armure 'E.O.R.' de 1917: armure officiellement émise, 15 armure britannique de 1916 - Casque d'acier 'Brodie', 'necklet' en soie et armure corporelle 'Drayfield'.

und einer Höchstgeschwindigkeit von 72 km/h. Die Ausrüstung entspricht einem "Dan R", wozu eine Schutzbrille, Handschuhe, Leggings und ein Revolver Kal. .0455 in einem Gürtel des Model 1914 gehören.

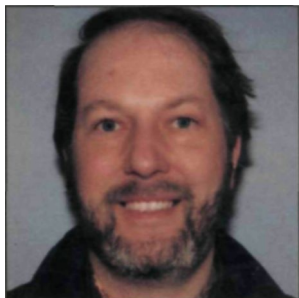
I: Ausrüstung der britischen Infanterie, 1914-18. 1 Die Lederausrüstung der Infanterie des Modells 1914 mit allen Bestandteilen der "Marsch"-Ausrüstung. Das Packstück ist am Rücken festgeschnallt, und der Tornister wird auf der linken Seite getragen. Außerdem wurden folgende Gegenstände mitgetragen: 2 "Durchzieher" aus Whipcord zur Reinigung des Gewehrlautes; 3 zusätzliche Munition in einem Bandolier aus Baumwolle; 4 ein Klappmesser; 5 Kochgeschirr; 6 "Tragtasche" für Dinge wie Besteck, Rasierer, Kamm, Lederbürste, Zahnbürste usw. 7 Olkännchen (das Kännchen und der "Durchzieher" wurden im Gewehrkolben verstaut). 8 Breithacken-Aufsatz des Schanzzeugs.

J: Infanteriewaffen 1914-18. 1 "Short Magazine Lee-Enfield", kurz SMLE, mit offenem Schloß, eingelegerter Ladung und angebrachtem Tragriemen und Verschußdeckel. 2 Die Gewehrgranate Nummer 3 mit Granatpatrone daneben. 3 Die spätere Gewehrgranate Nummer 26 wurde von einem Entladebehälter gefeuert. 4 Die Gewehrgranate Nummer 23 wurde von einer Vorrichtung aus Stahlblech, die mit Hilfe des Bajonetts am Gewehr befestigt wurde, gefeuert. 5 Das kanadische Ross Mark III. 6 Die veralteten Lee-Enfields. 7 Das japanische Arisaka Typ 38. 8 Das P-14 amerikanischer Machart, hier mit einem Zielfernrohr des Modells 1918 und einem improvisierten Backenpolster abgebildet. Webley-Revolver Kal. .455. 9 Mark VI. 10 Grundlage für Kal. .303 Munition für das Mark VII, das Standarddienstgewehr, und Maschinengewehr-Munition.

K: Granaten und der Kal. 3 leichte Mörser "Stokes". 1 Die Granate Nummer 1, die 1908 entworfen wurde und für den Werfer fast genauso gefährlich war wie für den Feind. Die Nachfrage nach Granaten führte zu Mustern, die so behelfsmäßig wie die Nummer 8 (2) waren, die aus Lebensmitteldosen war und mit einem Brook-Streichholz gefeuert wurde, das man zur Zündung über eine "Armbinde" zog. 3 Die Nummer 27 Weißphosphor-Granate, die für Rauch sorgte und zur Ausräucherung von Bunkern benutzt wurde. 4 Die Nummer 5 "Mills"-Granate und 5 Die leichtere Nummer 34 "Eier"-Granate. 6 Typische Markierungen auf dem Zylinder einer Granate Nummer 5. 7 Der leichte Mörser "Stokes" Kal. 3 aus dem Jahr 1915 sieht den heutigen Modellen erstaunlich ähnlich. Der Lauf, die Grundplatte und das Gestell (Zweibein) wogen zusammen 113 Pfund. 8 Er warf eine Bombe, die 10 3/4 Pfund wog. Die Antriebskraft stammte von der Patrone mit 12 Bohrungen (9) und verstärkenden Ringladungen am Boden der Bombe.

L: Körperschutz, Knüppel und Dolche. 1 Bajonett-Dolch für den Mk VI Webley-Revolver. 2 Schützengraben-Knüppel. 3 Dolch aus einem zurechtgeschnittenen deutschen Bajonett. 4 Panzermaske - an den Ringen wurde der Kettenschutz angebracht. 5 Dolch aus der Feldzeugmeisterei. 6 Schützengraben-Knüppel. 7 Stoßdolch und Schlagring. 8 Faserhelm für Panzerbesatzungen. 9 Fußangeln. 10 Französischer "Adnan"-Helm - Britische Truppenteile erhielten eine Ladung dieser Helme, bevor der "Brodie"-Helm erhältlich war. 11 Der "französisch-britische" Kuraß des Jahres 1916 - Plattenpanzer. 12 Schützengraben-Schild. 13 MacAdam-Schild/Spaten. 14 Der Körperpanzer "E.O.B." des Jahres 1917 - offiziell ausgegebener Körperschutz. 15 Britischer Körperschutz des Jahres 1916 - "Brodie"-Stahlhelm, "Halbschutz" aus Schichtseide und Körperschild "Drayfield".

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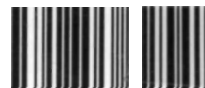
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