



The First World War

A virtual museum by
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Welcome to a museum of the First World War

In my museum, you can expect to learn about everything you would expect of the First World War, such as the weapons and the fighting that happened, but also to have your beliefs about the Great War challenged, because it wasn't just young English men in trenches shooting guns at the Germans.



Weapons in the First World War



Rifles

Rifles were used throughout the war by all types of soldiers. They often had short, pointed blades called bayonets attached to the end which could be used in close combat.



Tanks

Tanks were only used half way through the war on the 15th September 1916. But were first used strategically on the 20th November 1917 in the Battle of Cambrai.



Poison Gas

Poisoned gas was first used on the 22nd April 1915. Different types of gases used were: tear gas, chlorine, phosgene and diphosgene and mustard gas. Out of all of them Chlorine gas was the most deadliest.

"War is long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror."

Life in the Trenches

Soldiers didn't spend all of the time on the front line fighting, they spent most of their time behind the line. 15% of a soldier's time was spent on the front line, 10% in the support trench, 30% in the reserve trench and the rest out of the trenches altogether.



Each soldier would get bacon, corned beef, a quarter of a loaf of bread, cheese and later on vegetables. Also, each day they would get two big teaspoons full of rum. Each soldier would have his own washkit which was just as essential to his survival as his rifle. The soldiers had to shave each day apart from their top lips, if they could grow a mustache they had to have one.

There was more to worry about than guns



Trench Foot

Trench foot was caused by the damp, dirty and cold conditions in the trenches. Soldiers' feet would swell up and become painful, and if not treated, could become gangrenous and need amputating.



Shell Shock

Shell shock was a psychological condition soldiers faced after months of artillery and rifle fire. Mental health wasn't properly understood during the war, but shell shock is now understood to be a form of PTSD.



Gas Injuries

Mustard gas was the most commonly used. Soldiers protected their eyes and lungs with gas masks but could do nothing to prevent the burns and blistering of skin through gas soaked uniforms. Chlorine and Phosgene caused quick suffocation and death.

Women in War



Dorothy Field

Dorothy Field was a nurse in the Voluntary Aid Detachment. She was one of the first women to go overseas to treat wounded soldiers in France, working at General Hospitals first in Versailles and then Rouen, where she treated many of the wounded from the Somme. Despite being 120km from the battle, she noted in her diary that she could hear the artillery firing 'very distinctly'. At 4am on 2nd July, the day after the Somme began, the first convoy of 170 injured soldiers arrived at Rouen and Dorothy described this as 'the "going over the top" results'. These soldiers were followed by hundreds more, and Dorothy didn't stop working until 13th July. She was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star and continued working until the end of the war.

It wasn't just the British...



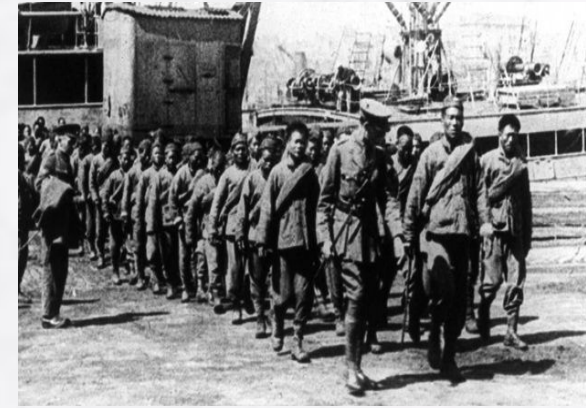
The Indian Army

The Indian Army was made up of men from all over India. More than 4,000 Indian soldiers were killed or wounded in the first three days of fighting. There were 1 ½ million Indian soldiers in the British Army.



African Soldiers

The first shot was fired by an African soldier in the British Army, his name was Alhaji Grunshi. There were 2 million African soldiers in the British Army.



Chinese Labour Corps

Men from China were given the most menial tasks like digging trenches, lugging ammo and burying bodies. There were about 100,000 Chinese labourers in the British Army.

Different stories of the same war

James William Dean

My Great-Great-Grandfather

Private in the East Surrey Regiment

Private Dean joined the army in November 1915. He was shot in the trenches in October 1916 and returned to England, no longer being able to fight. He married in 1917 and worked in a rubber



Freddie Grace

My Nan's cousin

Private in the Prince of Wales' Own

Civil Service Rifles

Died 22/03/1918 aged 19

His name is on the Arras Memorial, and on the Ring of Remembrance along with 580,000 others, listed alphabetically with no distinction between rank and nationality.

