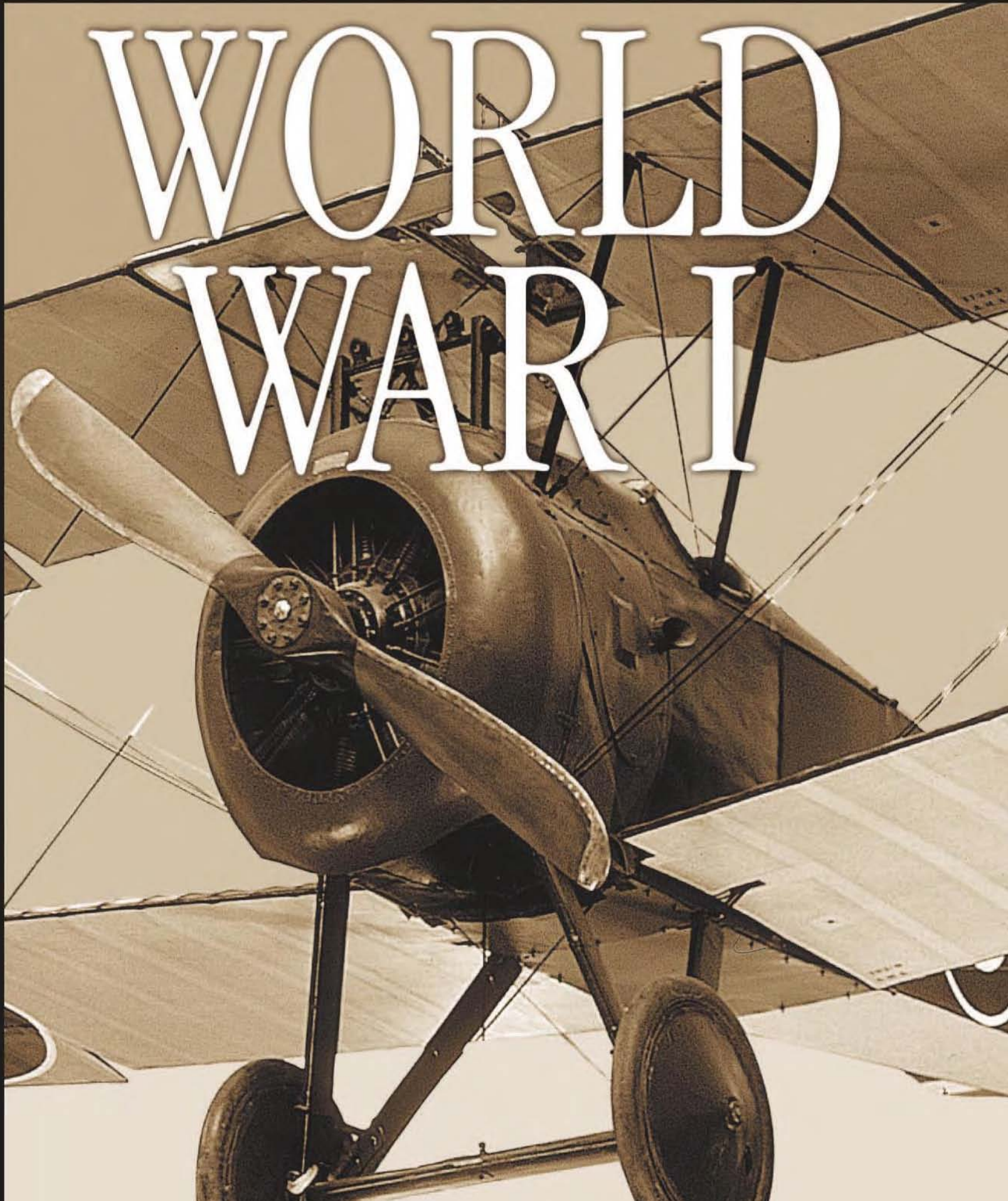




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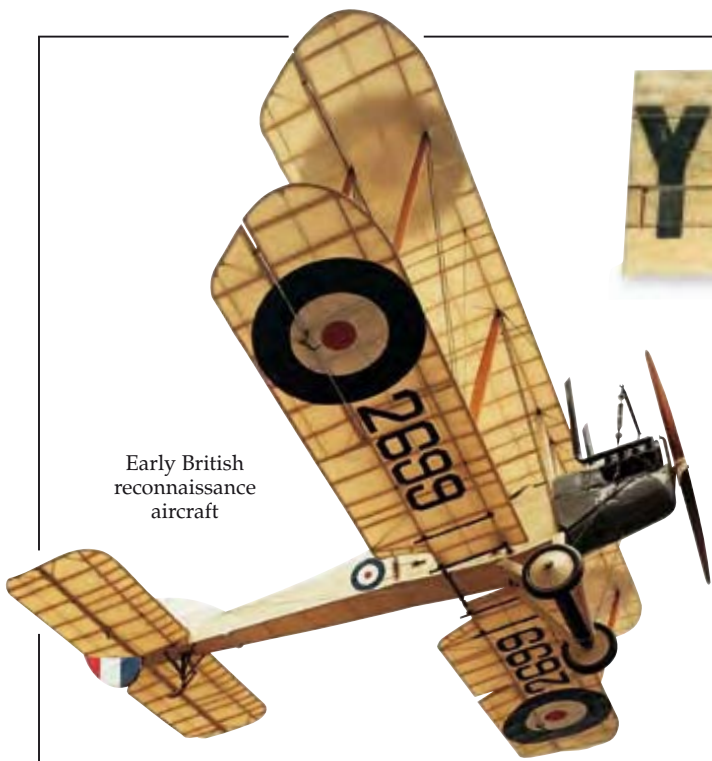
# WORLD WAR I





Eyewitness  
**WORLD WAR I**





Early British reconnaissance aircraft



Signboard from Ypres station, 1916



Book that stopped a bullet



Early gas helmet



British 20 lb (9 kg) Hales bomb



British "carcass" incendiary bomb



French tin soldiers



German incendiary bomb, dropped during first air raid on London



Model of British motor ambulance used on the Western Front



Prussian Iron Cross

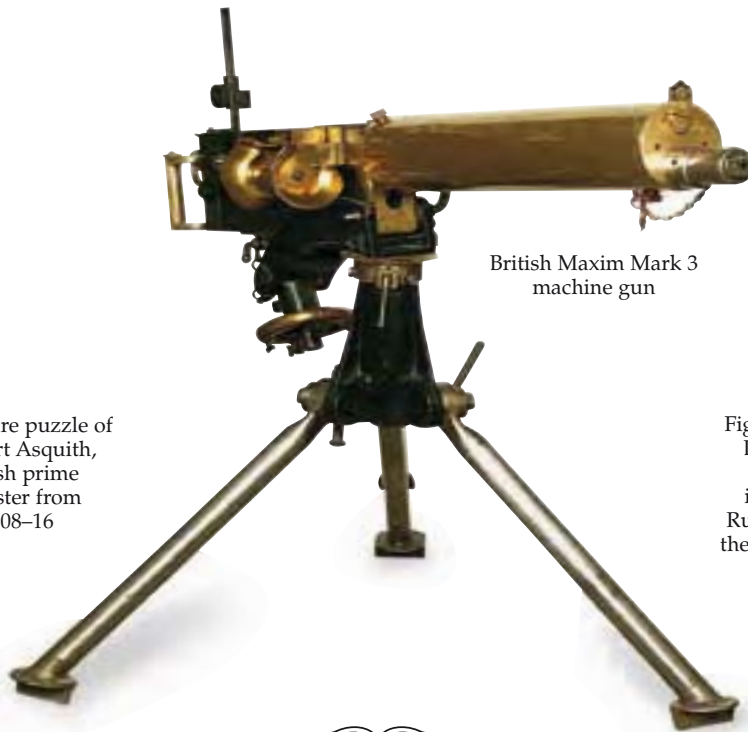
# Eyewitness WORLD WAR I



US Distinguished Service Cross

Written by  
**SIMON ADAMS**

Photographed by  
**ANDY CRAWFORD**



British Maxim Mark 3 machine gun

Caricature puzzle of Herbert Asquith, British prime minister from 1908–16



Figurine of Grand Duke Nicolas, commander-in-chief of the Russian armies at the start of the war



IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

British officer's compass



LONDON, NEW YORK, TORONTO,  
MELBOURNE, MUNICH, and DELHI

French *Croix de Guerre* medal awarded for valour



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German steel helmet adapted for use with a telephone



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This Eyewitness® Guide has been conceived by  
Dorling Kindersley Limited and Editions Gallimard

Hardback edition first published in Great Britain in 2001.  
This edition first published in Great Britain in 2004  
by Dorling Kindersley Limited,  
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL

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A Penguin Group

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 1 4053 0298 4

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British and German barbed wire



British steel helmet with visor



Grenade



Dummy rifles used by British army recruits, 1914–15

German medical orderly's pouch



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High  
explosive  
shells



# Divided Europe

AT THE START of the 20th century, the countries of Europe were increasingly hostile to each other. Britain, France, and Germany competed for trade and influence overseas, while Austria-Hungary and Russia both tried to dominate the Balkan states of south-east Europe. Military tension between Germany and Austria-Hungary on the one hand and Russia and France on the other led to the formation of powerful military alliances. A naval arms race added to the tension. In 1912–13 two major wars broke out in the Balkans as rival states battled to divide Turkish-controlled lands between them. By 1914 the political situation in Europe was tense, but few believed that a continental war was inevitable.



## HMS DREADNOUGHT

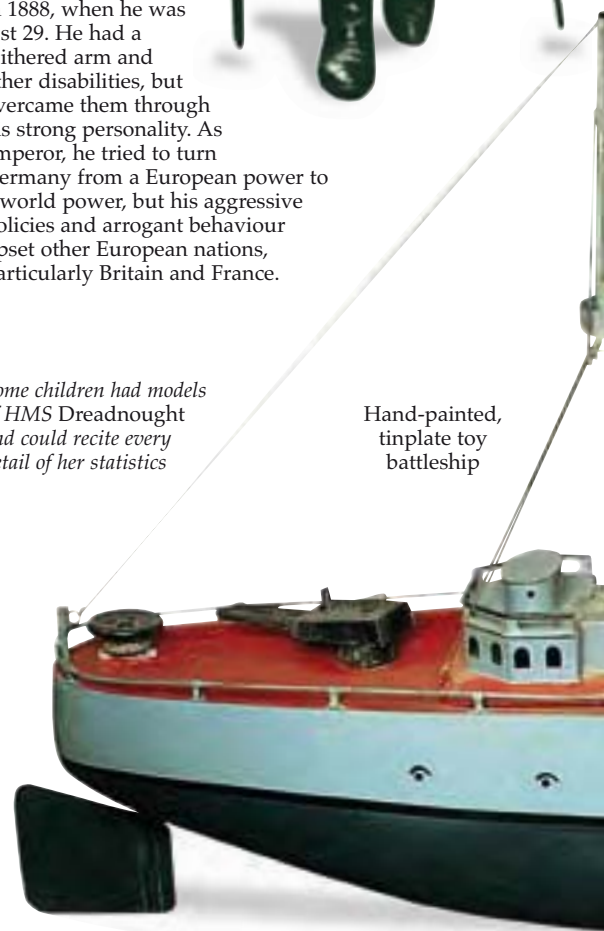
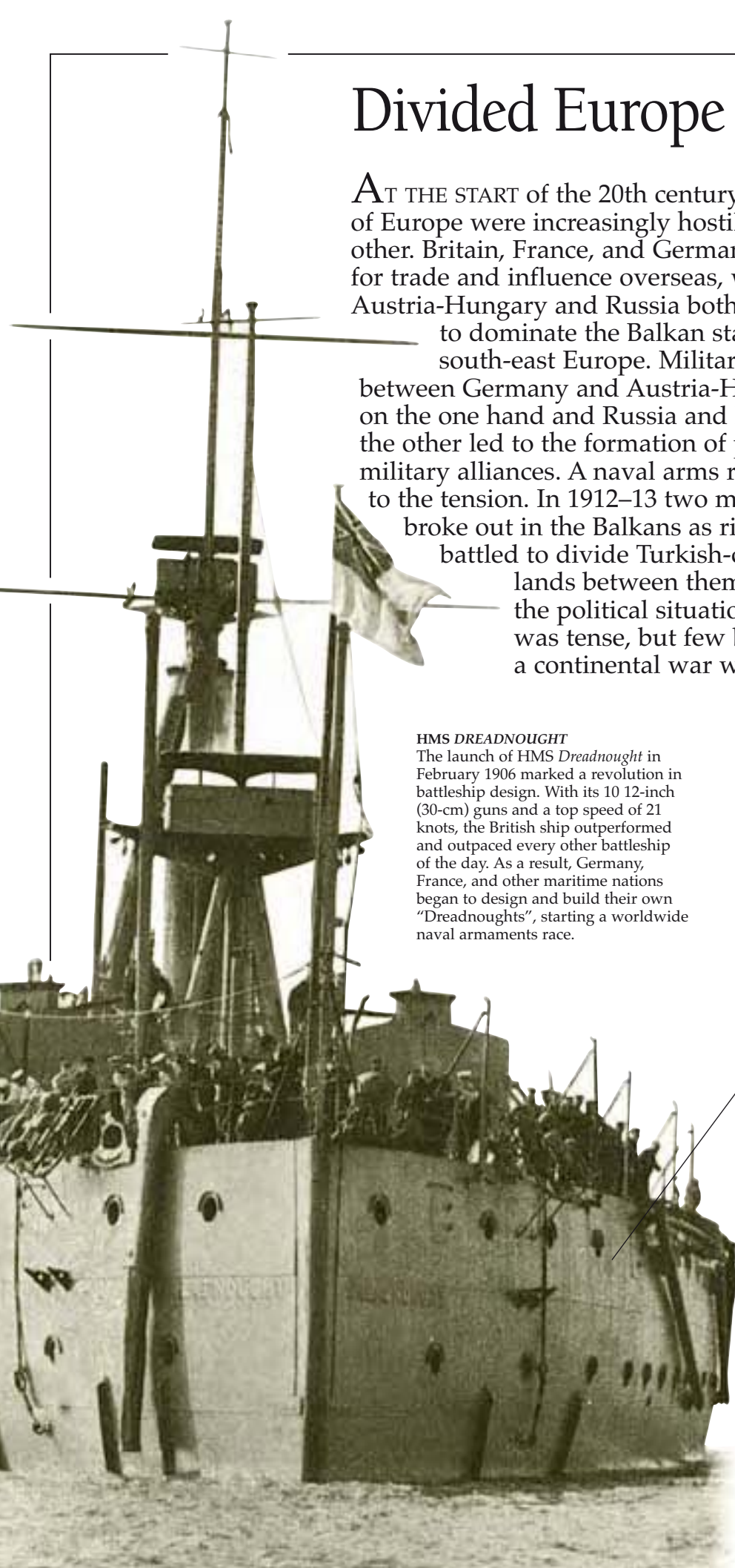
The launch of HMS *Dreadnought* in February 1906 marked a revolution in battleship design. With its 10 12-inch (30-cm) guns and a top speed of 21 knots, the British ship outperformed and outpaced every other battleship of the day. As a result, Germany, France, and other maritime nations began to design and build their own "Dreadnoughts", starting a worldwide naval armaments race.

## KAISER WILHELM II

Wilhelm II became emperor of Germany in 1888, when he was just 29. He had a withered arm and other disabilities, but overcame them through his strong personality. As emperor, he tried to turn Germany from a European power to a world power, but his aggressive policies and arrogant behaviour upset other European nations, particularly Britain and France.

*Some children had models of HMS Dreadnought and could recite every detail of her statistics*

Hand-painted, tinplate toy battleship







**EUROPEAN RIVALRIES**

In 1882 Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy signed the Triple Alliance to protect themselves against invasion. Alarmed by this, France and Russia formed an alliance in 1894. Britain signed ententes (understandings) with France in 1904 and Russia in 1907. During the war, Serbia, Montenegro, Belgium, Romania, Portugal, and Greece fought with the Allies. Bulgaria and Turkey fought alongside Germany and Austria-Hungary – the Central Powers. Italy joined the Allies in 1915.

- Central Powers
- Allied Nations
- Neutral



Tsar Nicholas II of Russia

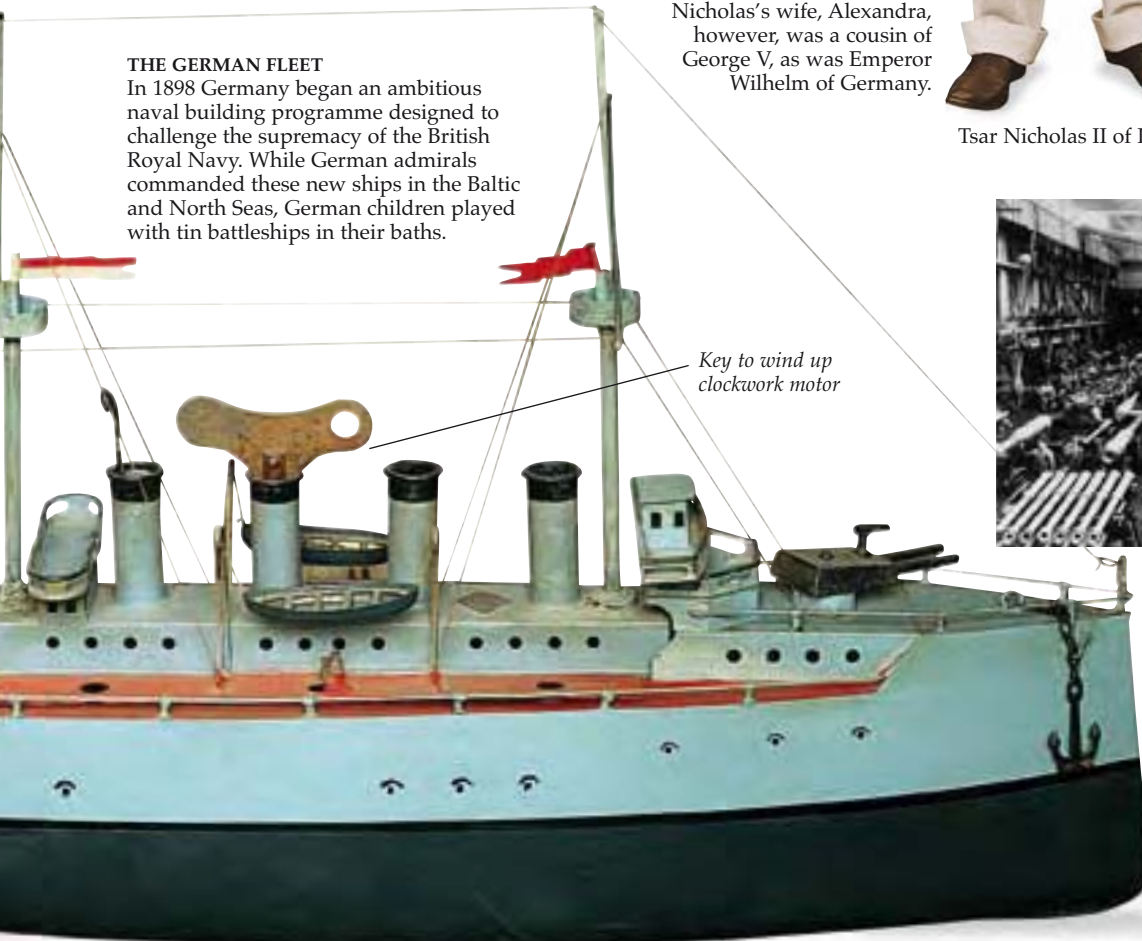
George V of Britain

**A FAMILY AFFAIR?**

Although George V and Tsar Nicholas II look very similar, they were not directly related. Nicholas's wife, Alexandra, however, was a cousin of George V, as was Emperor Wilhelm of Germany.

**THE GERMAN FLEET**

In 1898 Germany began an ambitious naval building programme designed to challenge the supremacy of the British Royal Navy. While German admirals commanded these new ships in the Baltic and North Seas, German children played with tin battleships in their baths.



Key to wind up clockwork motor



**THE POWER HOUSE**

The factory, shown above, in the Ruhr valley of western Germany belonged to the Alfred Krupp Arms Company. The Krupp family was the largest arms supplier in the world. Germany was a largely agricultural nation when it became a united country in 1871. Over the next 30 years, new iron, coal, steel, engineering, and shipbuilding industries turned Germany into the third biggest industrial country in the world, after the USA and Britain.



**THE ASSASSINS**  
Gavrilo Princip, above right, fired the fatal shot. He belonged to the Black Hand terrorists, who believed that Bosnia should be part of Serbia.

# The fatal shot

ON 28 JUNE 1914 the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Bosnia. Bosnia had been part of Austria-Hungary since 1908, but it was claimed by neighbouring Serbia. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for

the assassination, and on 28 July declared war. What began as the third Balkan war rapidly turned into a European war. Russia supported Serbia, Germany supported Austria-Hungary, and France supported Russia. On 4 August, Germany invaded neutral Belgium on its way to France. It intended to knock France out of the war before turning its attention to Russia, thus avoiding war on two fronts. But Britain had guaranteed to defend Belgium's neutrality, and it too declared war on Germany. The Great War had begun.

### THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN ARMY

The Austro-Hungarian empire had three armies – Austrian, Hungarian, and the “Common Army”. Ten main languages were spoken! The official one was German, but officers had to learn their men's language, leading to frequent communication difficulties. The complex structure of the army reflected Austria-Hungary itself, which in reality was two separate monarchies ruled by one monarch.



Austro-Hungarian Reiter (Trooper) of the 8th Uhlan (Lancer) Regiment



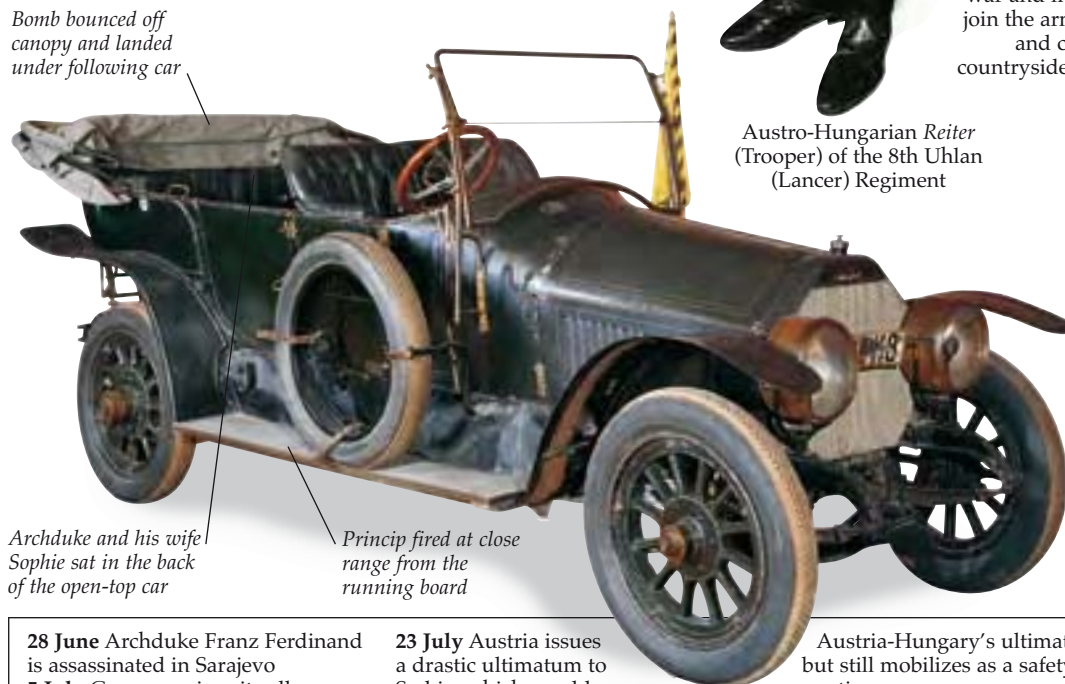
**MOBILIZE!**  
During July 1914, military notices were posted up across Europe informing citizens that their country's army was being mobilized (prepared) for war and that all those belonging to regular and reserve forces should report for duty.

### GERMANY REJOICES

Germany prepared its army on 1 August, declaring war against Russia later the same evening and against France on 3 August. Most Germans in the cities were enthusiastic for the war and many civilians rushed to join the army in support of Kaiser and country. Germans in the countryside were less enthusiastic.



Bomb bounced off canopy and landed under following car



Archduke and his wife Sophie sat in the back of the open-top car

Princip fired at close range from the running board

### ONE DAY IN SARAJEVO

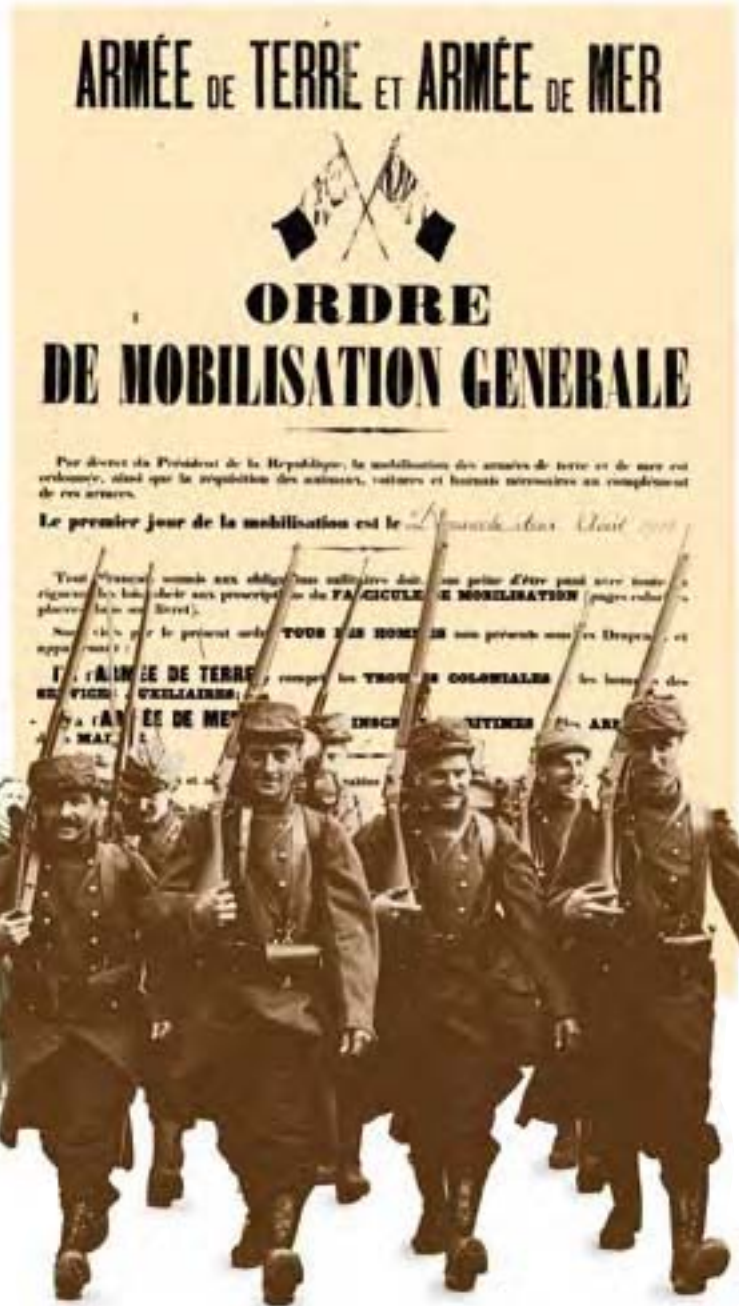
The six assassins – five Serbs and one Bosnian Muslim – lay in wait along Archduke Ferdinand's route to the Austrian governor's residence in Sarajevo. One of them threw a bomb at Ferdinand's car, but it bounced off and exploded under the following car, injuring two army officers. The Archduke and his wife went to visit the injured officers in hospital 45 minutes later. When their car took a wrong turning, Gavrilo Princip stepped out of the crowd and shot the couple. Ferdinand's wife died instantly and he died 10 minutes later.

**28 June** Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo  
**5 July** Germany gives its ally, Austria-Hungary total support for any action it takes against Serbia

**23 July** Austria issues a drastic ultimatum to Serbia, which would undermine Serbian independence  
**25 July** Serbia agrees to most of

Austria-Hungary's ultimatums, but still mobilizes as a safety precaution  
**28 July** Austria-Hungary ignores Serbia's readiness to seek a peaceful

end to the crisis and declares war  
**30 July** Russia mobilizes in support of its ally, Serbia  
**31 July** Germany demands that Russia stop its mobilization



German (above) and French (right) mobilization posters



**VIVE LA FRANCE**

The French army mobilized on 1 August. For many Frenchmen, the war was an opportunity to seek revenge for the German defeat of France in 1870–71 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to German control.

**ALL ABOARD!**

The German slogans on this westbound train read "Day trip to Paris" and "See you again on the Boulevard", as all Germans believed that their offensive against France would soon take them to Paris. French trains heading east towards Germany carried similar messages about Berlin.

*"The lamps are going out all over Europe"*

SIR EDWARD GREY  
BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY, 1914



**1 August** Germany mobilizes against Russia and declares war; France mobilizes in support of its ally, Russia; Germany signs a treaty with Ottoman Turkey; Italy

declares its neutrality  
**2 August** Germany invades Luxembourg and demands the right to enter neutral Belgium, which is refused

**3 August** Germany declares war on France  
**4 August** Germany invades Belgium on route to France; Britain enters the war to safeguard

Belgian neutrality  
**6 August** Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia  
**12 August** France and Britain declare war on Austria-Hungary



**CHRISTMAS TREAT**  
The London Territorial Association sent each of their soldiers a Christmas pudding in 1914. Other soldiers received gifts in the name of Princess Mary, daughter of King George V.

# War in the west

EVER SINCE THE 1890s, Germany had feared that it would face a war on two fronts – against Russia in the east and against France, Russia’s ally since 1893, in the west. Germany knew the chances of winning such a war were slim. By 1905, the chief of the German staff, Field Marshal Count Alfred von Schlieffen, had developed a bold plan to knock France swiftly out of any war before turning the full might of the German army against Russia. For this plan to work, the

German army had to pass through Belgium, a neutral country. In August 1914, the plan went into operation. German troops crossed the Belgian border on 4 August, and by the end of the month, invaded northern France. The Schlieffen Plan then required the army to sweep around the north and west of Paris, but the German commander, General Moltke, modified the plan and instead headed east of Paris. This meant his right flank (side) was exposed to the French and British armies. At the Battle of the Marne on 5 September, the German advance was held and pushed back. By Christmas 1914, the two sides faced stalemate along a line from the Belgian coast in the north to the Swiss border in the south.

**IN RETREAT**  
The Belgian army was too small and inexperienced to resist the invading German army. Here, soldiers with dog-drawn machine guns are withdrawing to Antwerp.



**IN THE FIELD**

The British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) had arrived in France by 22 August 1914. Its single cavalry division included members of the Royal Horse Artillery, whose L Battery fired this 13-pounder quick firing Mark I gun against the German 4th Cavalry Division at the Battle of N ry on 1 September. This held up the German advance into France for one morning. Three gunners in the battery received Victoria Crosses for their valour.

*Third gunner fires the gun on command*

*Second gunner loads the shell*

*First gunner hands shell to second gunner on command*

*Steel helmet*

*Shaft to attach gun to horses that pull the gun along*

*Soldiers wore puttees, long strips of cloth wrapped around their legs*





**THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE**  
 On Christmas Eve 1914, soldiers on both sides of the Western Front sang carols to each other in comradely greeting. The following day, troops along two-thirds of the front observed a truce. All firing stopped, and church services were held. A few soldiers crossed into no-man's-land to talk to their enemy and exchange simple gifts of cigarettes and other items. Opposite Ploegsteert Wood, south of Ypres, Belgium, a game of football took place between members of the German Royal Saxon Regiment and the Scottish Seaforth Highlanders. The Germans won 3-2. In some places, the truce lasted for almost a week. A year later, however, sentries on both sides were ordered to shoot anyone attempting a repeat performance.



**EYEWITNESS**  
 Captain E.R.P. Berryman of the 2nd Battalion 39th Garwhal Rifles, wrote a letter home describing the truce. He told his family that the Germans had put up Christmas trees in their trenches. This cartoon illustrates the absurdity of his situation – shooting the enemy one day and greeting them as friends the next.



*Soldier shooting at enemy with a note saying "Christmas Eve - Get 'em!"*

*British and German soldiers greeting each other on Christmas Day*

*German trench*

*Rope wrapped around recoil mechanism*

*Fires 12.5-lb (5.6-kg) shells a distance of 5,395m (5,900 yards)*



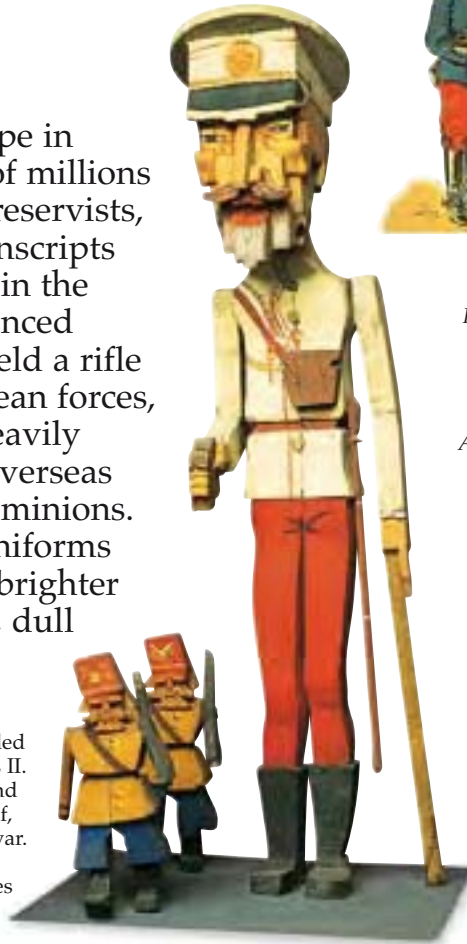
**HEADING FOR THE FRONT**  
 The German advance into northern France was so rapid that by early September, its troops were along the River Marne, only 40 km (25 miles) east of Paris. General Gallieni, military governor of Paris, took 600 taxis and used them to convey 6,000 men to the front line to reinforce the French 6th Army.

# Fighting men

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR in Europe in August 1914 changed the lives of millions of men. Regular soldiers, older reservists, eager recruits, and unwilling conscripts all found themselves caught up in the war. Some of them were experienced soldiers, but many had barely held a rifle before. In addition to the European forces, both Britain and France drew heavily on armies recruited from their overseas colonies and from the British dominions. The design and detail of their uniforms differed considerably, although brighter colours soon gave way to khaki, dull blue, and grey.

## GRAND DUKE NICOLAS

At the outbreak of war, the Russian army was led by Grand Duke Nicolas, uncle of Tsar Nicholas II. In August 1915, the Tsar dismissed his uncle and took command himself. As commander-in-chief, the Tsar dealt with the overall strategy of the war. The Russian armies were led by generals who directed the battles. The other warring countries employed similar chains of command.



France

Hat flaps could be pulled down to keep out the cold

Ammunition pouch

Jerkin could be made of goat- or sheepskin



Woollen puttees wrapped around shins

British soldier

Lee Enfield rifle No. 1 MkIII

Thick boots to protect feet



## EMPIRE TROOPS

The British and French armies included large numbers of recruits from their colonial possessions in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean. In addition, the British dominions of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa sent their own armies to take part in the conflict. Many of these troops had never left their home countries before. These Annamites (Indo-Chinese), above, from French Indo-China were stationed with the French army at Salonika, Greece, in 1916. They wore their own uniforms rather than those of the French army.

## EASTERN ALLIES

In Eastern Europe, Germany faced the vast Russian army, as well as smaller armies from Serbia and Montenegro. In the Far East, German colonies in China and the Pacific Ocean were invaded by Japan. These illustrations come from a poster showing Germany's enemies.



Russia



France

Britain

Belgium

**WESTERN ALLIES**

In Western Europe, Britain, France, and Belgium were allied against Germany. The British and French armies were large, but the Belgian army was small and inexperienced. These illustrations come from a German poster identifying the enemy.



Field tunic (Waffenrock)

Steel helmets were issued in 1916

Tent cloth

Cartridge pouch

Mauser rifle

Stick grenade

Gas mask

German soldier

**THE GERMAN ARMY**  
The German army was the strongest in Europe because it had been preparing for war. At the outbreak of hostilities, it consisted of 840,000 men. All men under the age of 45 were trained for military service and belonged to the reserve army. On calling up the reserves, the German army could expand to over four million trained men.



French infantrymen photographed in 1918



**THE FRENCH ARMY**

The French army was one of the largest in Europe. Including reservists and colonial troops, the French army totalled 3,680,000 trained men at the outbreak of war.

French infantryman, known as *le poilu*

Water bottle

Haversack with personal items

Lebel rifle



Russia

Serbia

Montenegro

Japan



**WAR LEADER**  
British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith was caricatured as “the last of the Romans” and replaced by David Lloyd George in December 1916.

# Joining up

AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, every European country but one had a large standing army of conscripted troops ready to fight. The exception was Britain, which had a small army made up of volunteers. On 6 August 1914, the Secretary of War, Lord Kitchener, asked for 100,000 new recruits.

Whole streets and villages of patriotic men queued to enlist. Most thought they would be home by Christmas. By the end of 1915, 2,446,719 men had volunteered, but more were needed to fill the depleted ranks of soldiers. In January 1916, conscription was introduced for all single men aged 18–41.



## QUEUE HERE FOR KING AND COUNTRY

At the outbreak of war, long queues formed at recruiting offices around the country. Men from the same area or industry grouped together to form the famous Pals battalions, so they could fight together. By mid-September, half a million men had volunteered to fight.

Small box respirator gas mask



Haversack contained the filter of the small box respirator

Pouch contained three clips, which each held five bullets



Two sets of five ammunition pouches on belt



**THE TEST**  
Every British recruit had to undergo a medical test to make sure he was fit to fight. Large numbers failed this test, because of poor eyesight, chest complaints, or general ill health. Others were refused because they were under 19, although many lied about their age. Once he passed the test, the recruit took the oath of loyalty to the king and was then accepted into the army.



“YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU”

A portrait of British War Minister, General Kitchener was used as a recruiting poster. By the time it appeared in late September 1914, however, most potential recruits had already volunteered.



**THE BASIC KIT**  
 A British soldier carried enough basic equipment to fight and to survive in the trenches. Along with his rifle and bayonet, he carried supplies of ammunition in pouches on his belt and an entrenching tool to dig a shallow hole to take cover in. By 1917, every soldier also carried a respirator in case of gas attacks. His survival kit included cutlery, washing kit, and spare clothes. When he went into battle, he transferred the most needed items out of his pack into a smaller haversack.



## Conscientious objectors

Some people who refused to join up were given white feathers as a sign of cowardice. Certain religious groups objected to the war as they believed it was wrong to kill, and some Socialists objected to fighting fellow workers. Both groups were known as conscientious objectors. Some objectors served in non-combatant units, such as medical services.

**EMPIRE TROOPS**  
 When war was declared, thousands of men volunteered from across the British Empire. Existing regiments, such as these Bengal Lancers, were augmented by new recruits. Indian troops served with distinction on the Western Front, in German East Africa, and in the Middle East.



Water-bottle

Haversack used for soldier's kit when in the trenches

Spoon

Shaving brush

Fork

Button stick

Knife

Cut-throat razor

Bayonet

Entrenching tool handle

Holdall

Razor case

Boot laces

Soldier's small kit



Tin containing tea and stock cubes

Linen bag to store iron ration

Bully beef

Biscuits



### RATIONS

Each soldier was given an "iron ration", consisting of hard biscuits, corned beef, and a tin containing tea and stock cubes. Daily rations could include bread, hard biscuits, "bully" meat, tinned stew, tinned pork and beans, sugar, tea, tinned plum and apple jam, and tinned butter. Ration parties carried the food to the front line in sandbags.



**PAYING FOR THE TROOPS**  
 The cost of raising and supplying vast armies meant each country had to raise taxes. Banks and private investors were asked to lend money to their government in the form of war loans. This famous French poster exhorts patriots to support the government's second national defence loan with the words "On les aura!" (We'll get them!).

# Digging the trenches



— Front line of trenches

## THE FRONT LINE

By December 1914, a network of trenches stretched along the Western Front from the Belgian coast in the north down through eastern France to the Swiss border, 645 km (400 miles) in the south. By 1917, it was possible in theory to walk most of the length of the front along the winding trench network.

## THE FIRST TRENCHES

Early trenches were just deep furrows, which provided minimal cover from enemy fire. These troops from the 2nd Scots Guards dug this trench near Ypres in October 1914. Their generals believed that such trenches were only temporary, as the “normal” war of movement would resume in the spring.



AT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR, both sides on the Western Front expected to take part in massive military manoeuvres over hundreds of kilometres of territory, and to fight fast-moving battles of advance and retreat. No-one expected a static fight between two evenly matched sides. A stalemate occurred mainly because powerful long-range artillery weapons and rapid-fire machine guns made it dangerous for soldiers to fight in unprotected, open ground. The only way to survive such weapons was to dig defensive trenches.

## ENTRENCHING TOOLS

Each soldier carried an entrenching tool. With it, the soldier could dig a scrape – a basic protective trench – if he was caught out in the open by enemy fire. He could also use it to repair or improve a trench damaged by an enemy artillery bombardment.

American M1910 entrenching tool



**SIGNPOSTS**  
Each trench was signposted to make sure no-one lost his way during an attack. Nicknames frequently became signposted names.



## POSITIONING THE TRENCH

Neither side had great expertise in digging trenches at the outbreak of war, but they quickly learned from their mistakes. The Germans usually built trenches where they could best observe and fire at the enemy while remaining concealed. The British and French preferred to capture as much ground as possible before digging their trenches.

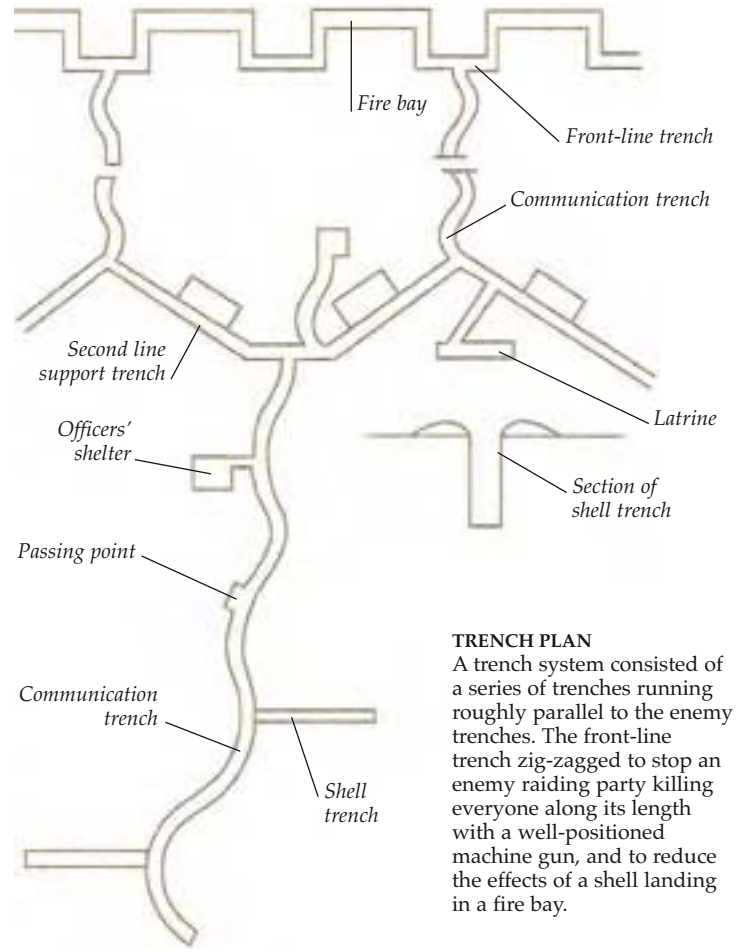


**BOARDED UP**

One of the main dangers of trench life was the possibility of being buried alive if the walls collapsed. By summer 1915, many German trenches were reinforced with wooden walls to prevent this happening. They were also dug very deep to help protect the men from artillery bombardments.

**HOME SWEET HOME?**

The Germans constructed very elaborate trenches because, as far as they were concerned, this was the new German border. Many trenches had shuttered windows and even doormats to wipe muddy boots on! Allied trenches were much more basic because the Allies expected to recapture the occupied territory.



**TRENCH PLAN**

A trench system consisted of a series of trenches running roughly parallel to the enemy trenches. The front-line trench zig-zagged to stop an enemy raiding party killing everyone along its length with a well-positioned machine gun, and to reduce the effects of a shell landing in a fire bay.

**COPING WITH THE MUD**

Rain, snow, and natural seepage soon filled trenches with water. Wooden slats, known as duckboards, were laid on the ground to keep soldiers' feet reasonably dry, but the constant mud remained one of the major features of trench life.



# Life in the trenches

DAYTIME IN THE TRENCHES alternated between short periods of intense fear, when the enemy fired, and longer periods of boredom. Most of the work was done at night when patrols were sent out to observe and raid enemy trenches, and to repair their own front-line parapets and other defences. Dawn and dusk were the most likely times for an enemy attack, so all the troops "stood to", that is manned the fire bays, at these times. The days were usually quiet, so the men tried to catch up on sleep while sentries watched the enemy trenches. Many soldiers used this time to write home or keep a diary of events. There were no set mealtimes on the front line, and soldiers ate as and when transport was available to bring food to the front by carrying parties. To relieve the boredom, soldiers spent one week to 10 days in the front line, then moved into the reserve lines, and finally went to a rear area to rest. Here, they were given a bath and freshly laundered clothes before returning to the trenches.



## A LITTLE SHELTER

The trenches were usually very narrow and often exposed to the weather. The Canadian soldiers in this trench have built a makeshift canopy to shelter under. The sides are made of sandbags piled on top of each other.



*Soldier removing mud from ammunition pouch with a piece of cloth*

## A RELAXING READ?

This re-creation from London's Imperial War Museum shows a soldier reading. While there was plenty of time for the soldiers to read during the day, they were often interrupted by rats scurrying past their feet and itching lice in their clothes.



## CLEAN AND TIDY

The cleaning of kit and the waterproofing of boots was as much a part of life in the trenches as it was in the barracks back home. These Belgian soldiers cleaning their rifles knew that such tasks were essential to maintaining combat efficiency.

## OFFICERS' DUG-OUT

This re-creation in London's Imperial War Museum of an officers' dug-out on the Somme in autumn 1916 shows the cramped conditions people endured in the trenches. The officer on the telephone is calling in artillery support for an imminent trench raid, while his weary comrade is asleep behind him on a camp bed. Official notices, photographs, and postcards from home are pinned around the walls.





French author Henri Barbusse (1873–1935) wrote of life in the trenches, denouncing the war in his novel *Le Feu (Under Fire)* of 1916.

Poem and self-portrait by British poet and artist Isaac Rosenberg (1890–1918)



*The Menin Road* (1918) by Paul Nash

## Artists and poets

Some soldiers used their spare time in the trenches to write poems or make sketches. A huge number wrote long letters home, or kept a diary. After the war, many of these writings were published. Literary records of trench life made fascinating and shocking reading. In 1916, the British government began to send official war artists, such as Paul Nash (1889–1946), to the front to record the war in paint.



Paints and brushes belonging to British war artist Paul Nash



### CAVE MEN

Ordinary soldiers – such as these members of the British Border Regiment at Thiepval Wood on the Somme in 1916 – spent their time off duty in “funk holes”, holes carved out of the side of the trench, or under waterproof sheets. Unlike the Germans, the British did not intend to stay in the trenches too long, so did not want the soldiers to make themselves comfortable.



### TRENCH CUISINE

These French officers are dining well in a reserve trench in a quiet area. Others were less fortunate, enduring tinned food or mass-produced meals cooked and brought up from behind the lines and reheated in the trench.

Soldiers served alongside a regiment of rats and lice



# Ready to fight

IT IS EASY TO imagine that most of the action on the Western Front took place when soldiers left their trenches and fought each other in open ground, or no-man's-land, between the two opposing front lines. In reality, such events were far rarer than the constant battle between soldiers in their facing lines of trenches. Both armies took every opportunity to take shots at anyone foolish or unfortunate enough to be visible to the other side. Even soldiers trying to rescue wounded comrades from no-man's-land or retrieve bodies caught on the barbed-wire fences were considered fair targets. Raiding parties from one front line to the other added to the danger. This relentless war of attrition kept every soldier on full alert, and meant that a watch had to be kept on the enemy lines every hour of the day.



## PREPARE TO FIRE

These German troops on the Marne in 1914 are firing through purpose-built gun holes. This enabled them to view and fire at the enemy without putting their heads above the parapet and exposing themselves to enemy fire. Later on in the war, sandbags replaced the earth ramparts. On their backs, the troops carry leather knapsacks with rolled-up greatcoats and tent cloths on top.

## IN CLOSE QUARTERS

Soldiers were armed with a range of close-combat weapons when they went on raiding parties in case they needed to kill an enemy. The enemy could be killed silently so that the raiding soldiers did not draw attention to themselves. The weapons were rarely used.



French trench knife



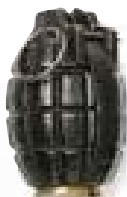
German stick grenade



German club



German timed and fused ball grenade



British Mills bomb

## WRITING HOME

Canon Cyril Lomax served in France in 1916-17 as a chaplain to the 8th Battalion Durham Light Infantry. As a non-combatant, he had time to describe in illustrated letters home some of the horrors he encountered. The armies of both sides had chaplains and other clergy at the front.



### WALKING WOUNDED

This recreation in London's Imperial War Museum shows a wounded German prisoner being escorted by a medical orderly from the front line back through the trench system to a regimental aid post. Many, however, were not so fortunate. A soldier wounded in no-man's-land would be left until it was safe to bring him back to his trench, usually at nightfall. Many soldiers risked their lives to retrieve wounded comrades. Sadly some soldiers died because they could not be reached soon enough.



### REGIMENTAL AID POST

Battalion medical officers, as shown in this recreation from London's Imperial War Museum, worked through the heat of battle and bombardment to treat the flood of casualties as best they could. They dressed wounds, tried to relieve pain, and prepared the badly wounded for the uncomfortable journey out of the trenches to the field hospital.



Path of bullet



### SAVED BY A BOOK

The soldier carrying this book was lucky. By the time the bullet had passed through the pages, its passage was slowed enough to minimise the injury it caused.

*"The German that I shot was a fine looking man ... I did feel sorry but it was my life or his "*

BRITISH SOLDIER JACK SWEENEY,  
21 NOVEMBER, 1916

### ALWAYS IN ACTION

This photograph of Bulgarian soldiers was taken in 1915. It shows that soldiers could never let their guard down while in a trench. A permanent look-out must be kept, and guns always primed and ready in case the enemy mounted a sudden attack. The soldiers had to eat in shifts to ensure their constant readiness for battle.



# Communication and supplies



**FIELD TELEPHONE**  
Telephones were the main communication method between the front line and headquarters. They relayed voice and Morse code messages.



**GETTING IN TOUCH**  
Teams of engineers – such as this German group – were trained to set up, maintain, and operate telephones in the field. This allowed closer and more regular contact between the front line and HQ than in previous wars.

COMMUNICATING WITH and supplying front-line troops is the biggest problem faced by every army. On the Western Front, this problem was particularly acute because of the length of the front line and the large number of soldiers fighting along it. In mid-1917, for example, the British army required 500,000 shells a day, and million-shell days were not uncommon. To supply such vast and hungry armies, both sides devoted great attention to lines of communication. The main form of transport remained the horse, but increasing use was made of mechanized vehicles. Germany made great use of railways to move men and supplies to the front. Both sides set up elaborate supply systems to ensure that front-line troops never ran out of munitions or food. Front-line troops also kept in close touch with headquarters and other units by telephone and wireless.



British night signal

**MISSILE MESSAGES**  
Enemy fire often cut telephone lines, so both sides used shells to carry written messages. Flares on the shells lit up to signal their arrival. Signal grenades and rockets were also widely used to convey pre-arranged messages to front-line troops.

Message rolled up in base

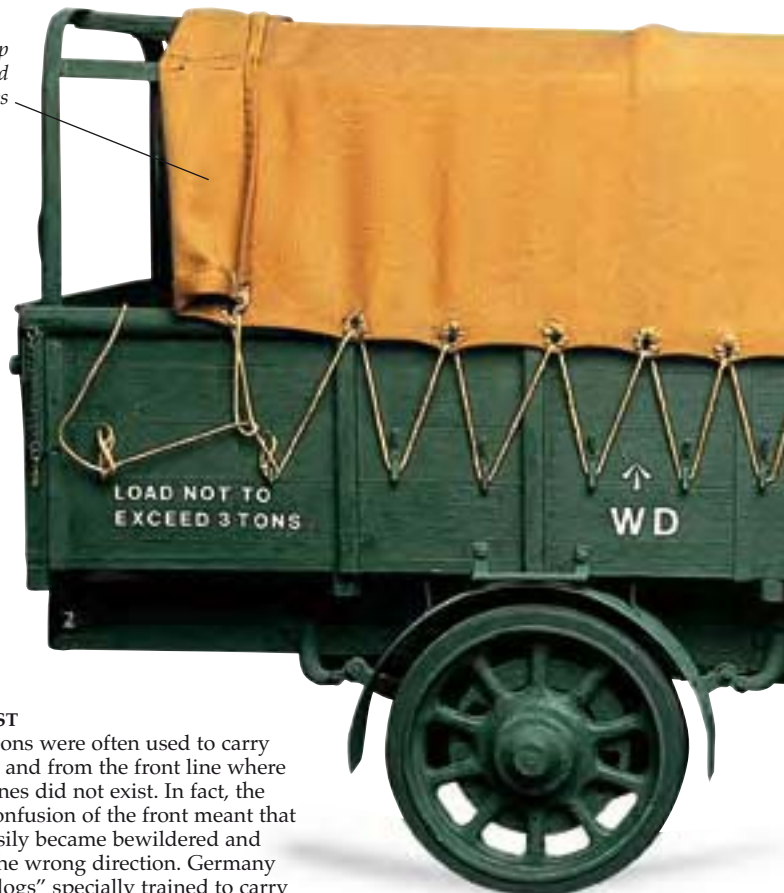
German message shell



French army pigeon handler's badge

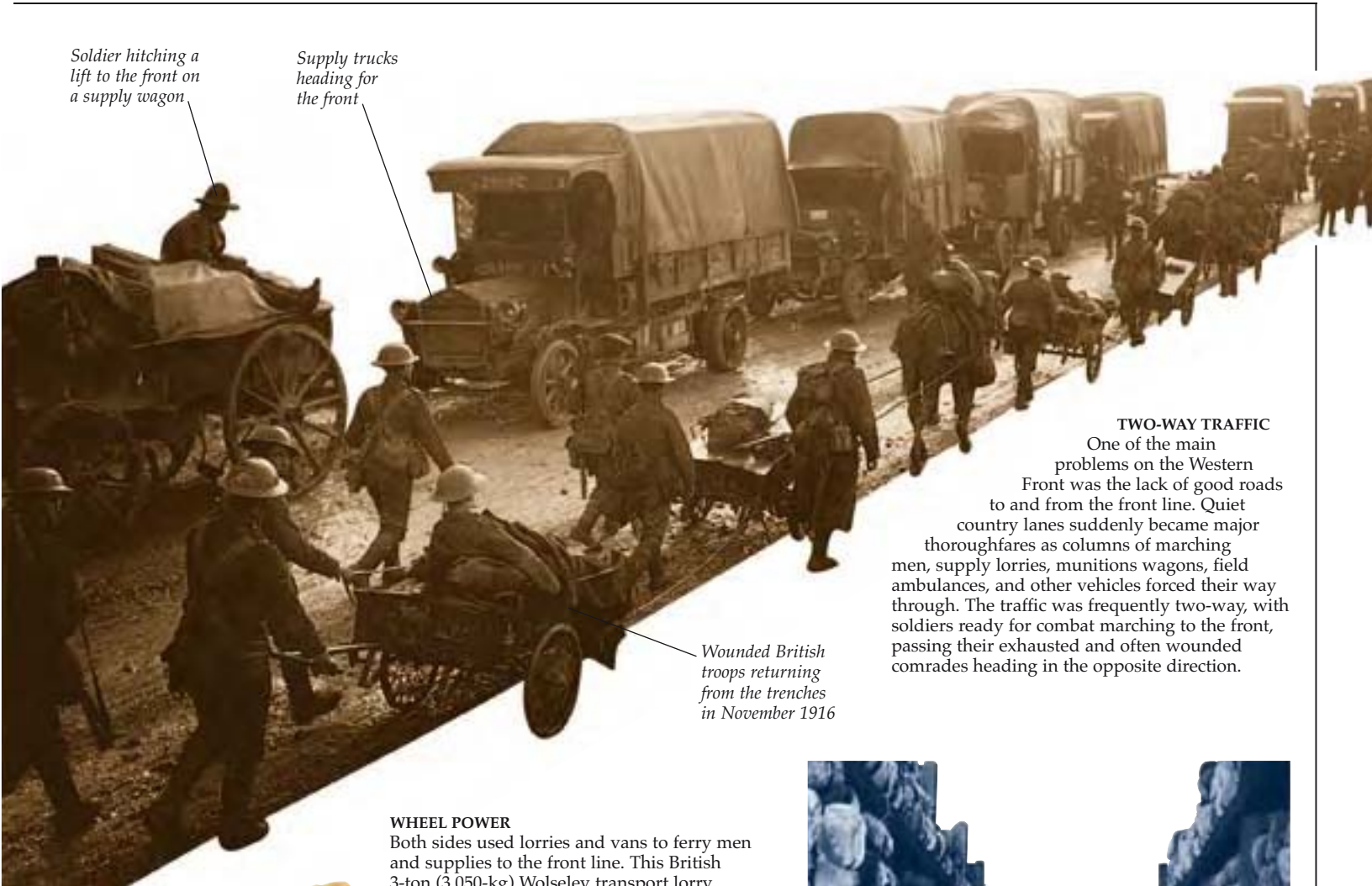


Canvas top secured with ropes



**PIGEON POST**  
Carrier pigeons were often used to carry messages to and from the front line where telephone lines did not exist. In fact, the noise and confusion of the front meant that the birds easily became bewildered and flew off in the wrong direction. Germany used "war dogs" specially trained to carry messages in containers on their collars.





*Soldier hitching a lift to the front on a supply wagon*

*Supply trucks heading for the front*

*Wounded British troops returning from the trenches in November 1916*

**TWO-WAY TRAFFIC**  
 One of the main problems on the Western Front was the lack of good roads to and from the front line. Quiet country lanes suddenly became major thoroughfares as columns of marching men, supply lorries, munitions wagons, field ambulances, and other vehicles forced their way through. The traffic was frequently two-way, with soldiers ready for combat marching to the front, passing their exhausted and often wounded comrades heading in the opposite direction.

**WHEEL POWER**

Both sides used lorries and vans to ferry men and supplies to the front line. This British 3-ton (3,050-kg) Wolseley transport lorry was specially built for war service, but other smaller lorries and vans were also used.



*British Wolseley 3-ton (3,050-kg) transport lorry*

*Sides dropped down for access*

*Open driver's cab*



**FABULOUS BAKER GIRLS**

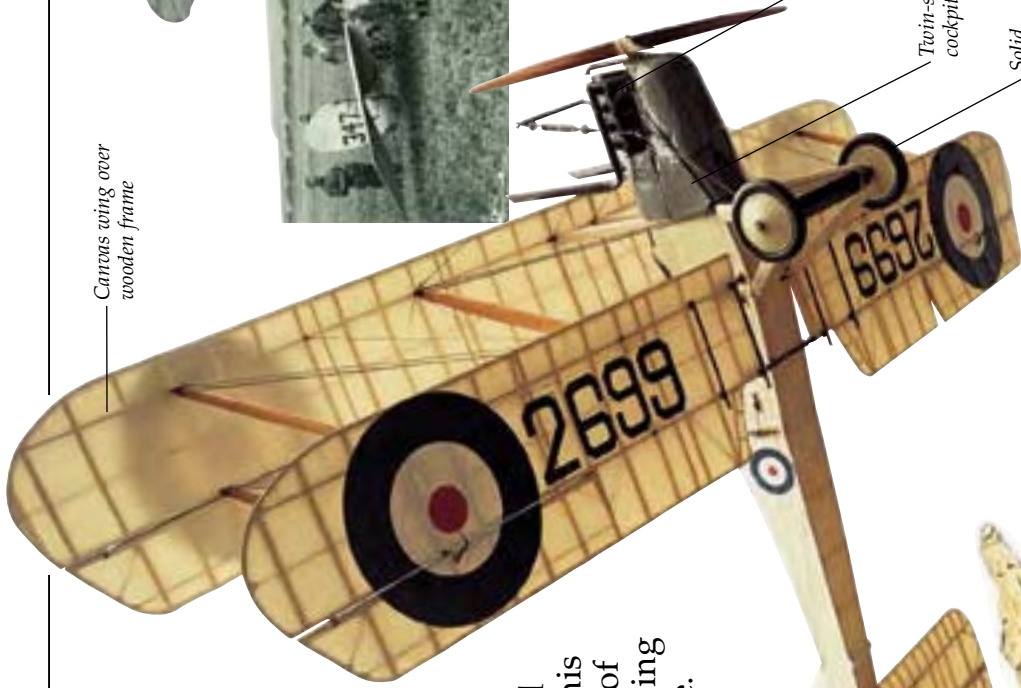
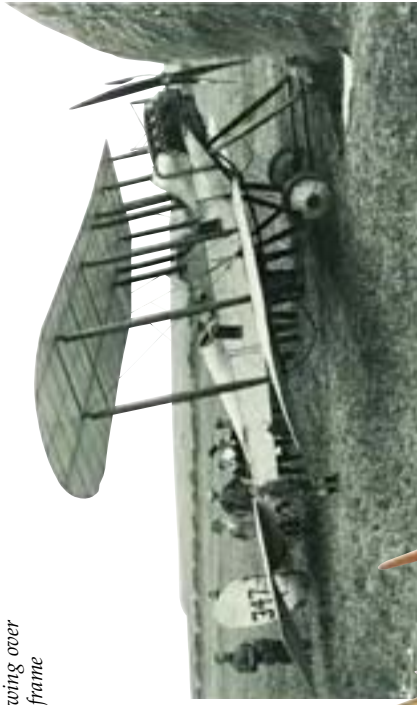
Behind the lines, vast quantities of food were produced every day to feed the soldiers at the front. British kitchens, canteens, and bakeries, such as this one in Dieppe, France, were often staffed by members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (W.A.A.C.). The Corps was set up in February 1917 to replace the men needed to fight on the front line. Women also played a major role as clerks, telephone operators, and storekeepers, ensuring that the front line was adequately supplied and serviced at all times.

# Observation and patrol

**G**ATHERING INTELLIGENCE ABOUT the enemy is of great importance during war, because that information can be used to mount a successful attack or repel an enemy advance. Interrogating prisoners was a very successful method of gathering information. Additionally, along the Western Front, both sides were ingenious in devising new methods to gather intelligence. Night-time patrols probed the strengths and weaknesses of enemy lines. This was hazardous work, as it meant crossing rows of barbed-wire entanglements and perhaps disturbing an unexploded shell or attracting enemy gunfire.

Observation turrets and periscopes were also used. Aircraft became increasingly popular since they could fly virtually unhindered over the enemy, observe their trenches and gun emplacements, and photograph the front line. This information could then be used to produce maps of the enemy lines.

Cantons wing over wooden frame



**AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE**  
Both sides used aircraft to observe enemy positions on the Western Front. At first, Allied commanders were suspicious of this new method. But in September 1914, French Air Service pilots saw the advancing German armies change direction near Paris. This information enabled the Allies to stop the German advance into France at the Battle of the Marne. The BE2a, above and left, was strong, stable, and easy to fly, making it ideal for reconnaissance work. The craft's pilot, Lieutenant H.D. Harvey-Kelley was the first British pilot to land in France after the outbreak of war.

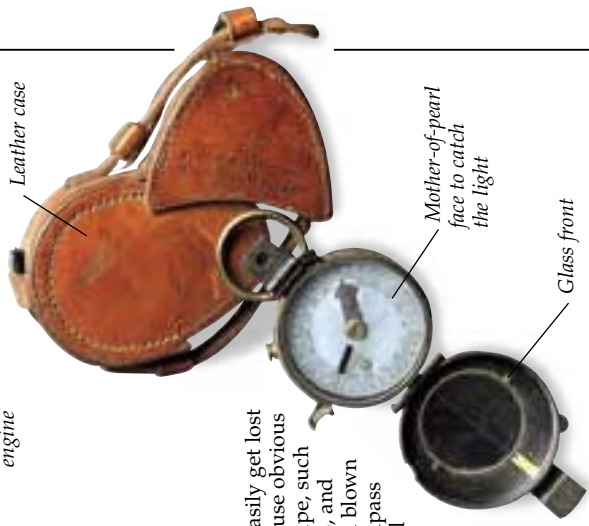
Twin-propeller engine

Twin-seater cockpit

Solid wheels

Royal Aircraft Factory Blériot Experimental (BE)2a used for reconnaissance and light bombing

Artificial tree was an exact replica of the real tree it replaced



Leather case

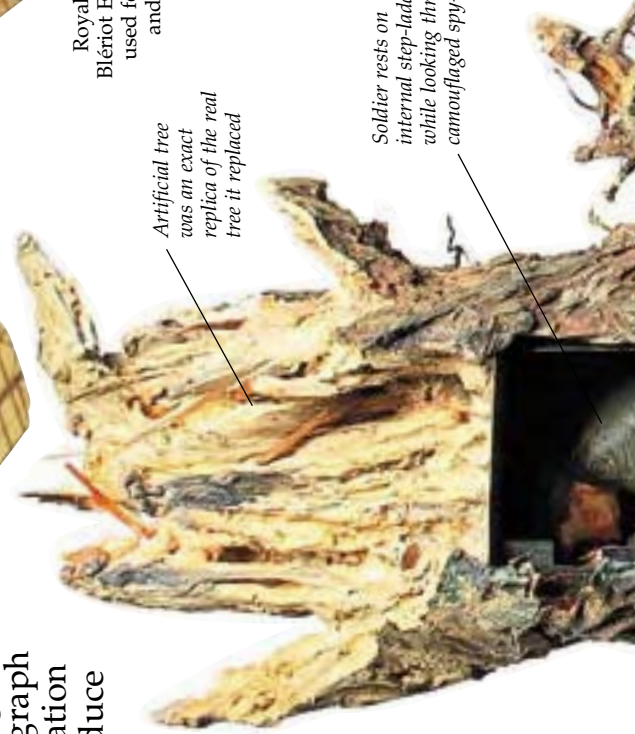
Mother-of-pearl face to catch the light

Glass front

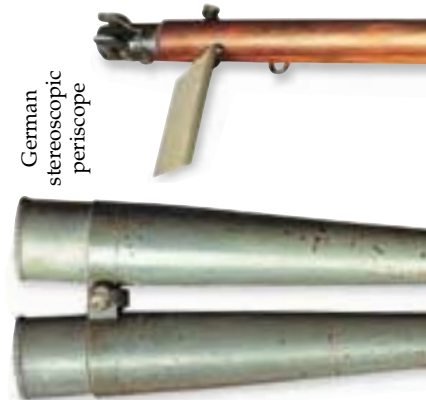
## COMPASS BEARINGS

A night patrol could easily get lost in no-man's-land because obvious features of the landscape, such as lanes, woods, fields, and even hills had all been blown away. A reflective compass was therefore essential if the patrol was to navigate safely and get back alive to its own trench before daybreak.

Soldier rests on internal step-ladder while looking through camouflaged spy-hole



German stereoscopic periscope





Adjustable eye pieces

Mirror to view enemy position

British "Ocentric" rifle periscope

**PERISCOPES**

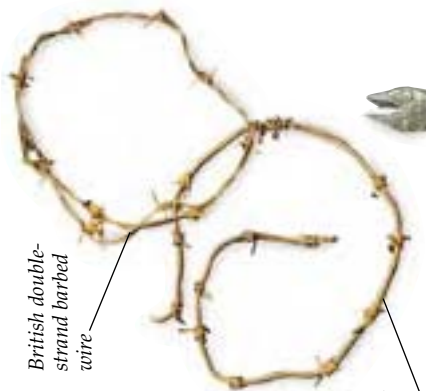
Soldiers looking at the enemy over the top of a trench risked being shot at. As a result, both sides developed sophisticated periscopes. The British also adapted a rifle for use in the trenches. Two mirrors were attached to the rifle so, while held upright, the soldier could use it as a periscope.

**BIRD'S EYE VIEW**

Both sides constructed artificial trees as an artillery observation post to direct fire at the enemy. A soldier clambered up a ladder inside the tree and peered with binoculars at the enemy lines through a spy-hole in the side of the trunk. The soldier passed on what he saw to a second soldier at the base of the post. The forward observation officer then relayed directions by telephone to an artillery battery behind the lines. This information enabled the artillery battery to direct its fire at the enemy more accurately than before. The recreation, right, is at London's Imperial War Museum.



**ALONG THE WIRE**  
The trenches along the Western Front were protected by rows of barbed-wire entanglements. Patrols went out at night to repair entanglements and to reconnoitre enemy lines. If an assault was planned for the next day, patrols cleared a path through the entanglements to allow their infantry unhindered access to the enemy's front line.



British double-strand barbed wire

German single-strand barbed wire



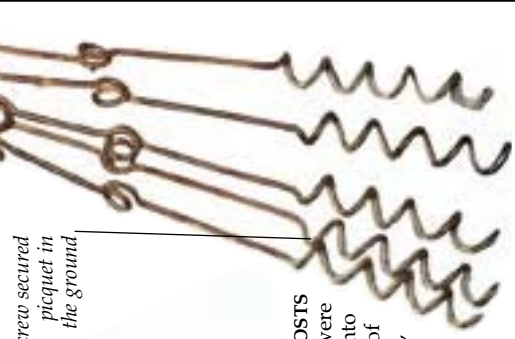
German wire cutters



British wire cutters

Loops at varying heights to hang barbed-wire entanglements on

Screw secured picquet in the ground



**SILENT POSTS**

The first barbed-wire entanglements were strung along wooden posts knocked into the ground with mallets. The noise of striking mallets often attracted enemy fire, so metal picquets were soon used by the Allies. The picquets were screwed silently into the ground and rolls of barbed-wire were hung on the loops.



**SIGHT SAVER**

In 1916–17 a chain-mail visor was added to the basic British helmet to protect the eyes. Visors were soon removed as they were difficult to see through.



**BEWARE!**

Soldiers at the front needed constant reminders to keep their heads down as they were so used to shells flying past. Warning signs were common.

# Bombardment

ARTILLERY DOMINATED the battlefields of World War I. A well-aimed bombardment could destroy enemy trenches, and knock out artillery batteries and communication lines. It could also help break up an infantry attack. But as defensive positions strengthened, artillery bombardments became longer and more intense. New tactics were required to break down enemy lines. The most effective was the creeping barrage, which rained down a moving curtain of heavy and insistent fire just ahead of attacking infantry.

Helmet



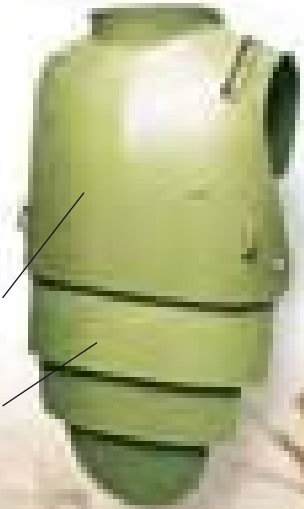
Visor for extra protection



**GERMAN ARMOUR**  
In January 1916 the German army replaced its distinctive spiked *Pickelhaube* with a rounded steel helmet. Body armour was first issued in 1916 to machine gunners.

Breastplate

Articulated plates to cover lower body



**HIDING THE GUN**

Two main types of artillery were used during the war – light field artillery, pulled by horses, and heavier guns, such as howitzers, moved by tractor and set up on reinforced beds. Once in place, artillery pieces were camouflaged to conceal them from the enemy.

British 8-in (20-cm) Mark V howitzer

**SHELL POWER**

The huge number of shells needed to maintain a constant artillery barrage against the enemy can be seen in this photograph of a British shell dump behind the Western Front.





**LOADING A HOWITZER**

Large pieces of artillery required a team of experienced gunners to load and fire them. This British 15-in (38-cm) howitzer was used on the Menin Road near Ypres in October 1917. The huge shell on the left of the picture is too large and heavy to lift, so it is being winched into position.

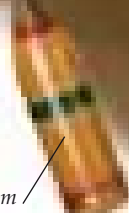
**EXPLOSION!**

The devastating impact of artillery fire can be seen in this dramatic picture of a British tank hit by a shell and bursting into flames. To its right, another tank breaks through the barbed wire. It was unusual for moving targets, such as tanks, to be hit, and most artillery fire was used to soften up the enemy lines before an attack.

British 13-pounder (5.9-kg) high-explosive shell



French 75-mm (2.9-in) shrapnel shell



Fired from a howitzer

British 4.5-in (11.4-cm) high-explosive shell



German 15-cm (5.9-in) shrapnel shell

**CLASSIFYING SHELLS**

Shells were classified by weight or diameter. High-explosive shells exploded on impact. Anti-personnel shrapnel shells exploded in flight and were designed to kill or maim.

# Over the top

ONCE THE ARTILLERY bombardment had pounded the enemy's defences, the infantry climbed out of their trenches and advanced towards enemy lines. The advance was very dangerous. Artillery bombardments rarely knocked out every enemy defence. Often, many gun emplacements and barbed-wire fences were still intact. Gaps in the defensive line were filled by highly mobile machine-gunners. Against them, a soldier armed with only a rifle and bayonet and laden with heavy equipment was an easy target. On the first day of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916, German machine-gun fire accounted for two British soldiers killed or injured along each metre (three feet) of the 28-km (16-mile) front.



## LEAVING THE TRENCH

The most frightening moment for a soldier was scrambling up a ladder out of his trench and into no-man's-land. Few men knew the horrors that awaited them.



Steel water jacket to cool gun barrel

Disc is part of the flash hider assembly, making the gun harder to spot

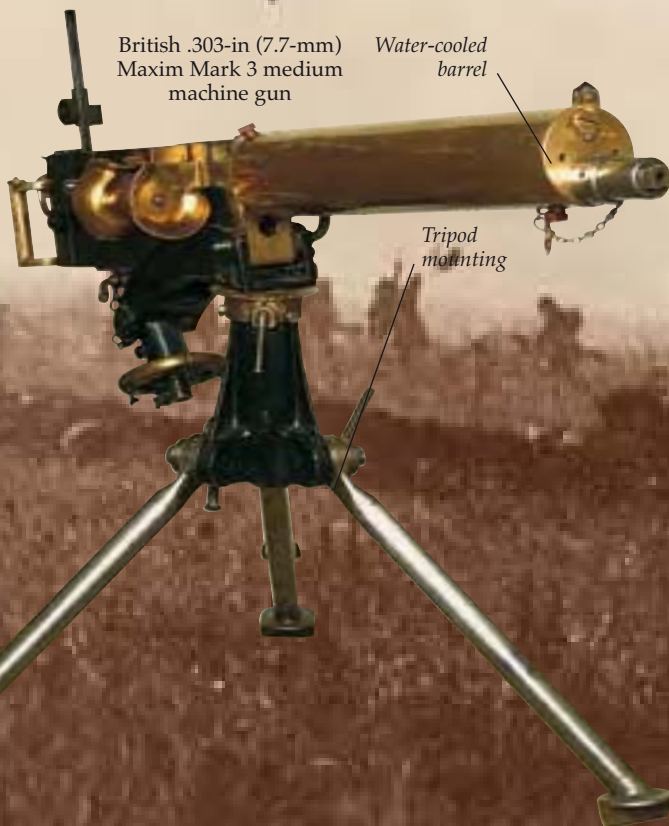
Trench mounting

German MG '08 Maxim machine gun



## IN ACTION

This German machine-gun crew is protecting the flank (side) of an advancing infantry troop on the Western Front. The reliability and firepower of machine guns made them effective weapons. Also, their small size and manoeuvrability made them difficult for the enemy to destroy.



British .303-in (7.7-mm) Maxim Mark 3 medium machine gun

Water-cooled barrel

Tripod mounting

## QUICK FIRING

Machine guns fired up to 600 bullets a minute. Ammunition was fitted into a fabric or metal-link belt, or in a metal tray fed into the gun automatically. The gun barrel was surrounded with a cold-water jacket to cool it.



#### FUTILE ATTACK

The Battle of the Somme lasted from 1 July 1916 until 18 November, when snowstorms and rain brought the attack to a muddy halt. The Allies captured about 125 sq km (48 sq miles) of land, but failed to break through the German lines, reducing much of the area to a desolate wasteland. The Germans had been on the Somme since 1914, so knew the terrain well. The British belonged to Kitchener's new army. Young and inexperienced, this was the first battle many of them had fought in.

*"The sunken road ... (was) ... filled with pieces of uniform, weapons, and dead bodies."*

LIEUTENANT ERNST JUNGER,  
GERMAN SOLDIER,  
THE SOMME, 1916



## First day on the Somme

The Allies planned to break through the German lines north of the River Somme, France, in 1916. On 24 June, the British began a six-day artillery bombardment on German lines, but the Germans retreated into deep bunkers and were largely unharmed. As the British infantry advanced at 7.30 am on 1 July, German machine gunners emerged from their bunkers and opened fire. Believing the artillery bombardment had destroyed German lines, the infantry marched in long, slow waves towards the enemy who literally mowed them down.

Below: Soldiers of the 103rd  
(Tyneside Irish) Brigade attack  
La Boisselle on the first day  
of the Somme

#### TENDING THE WOUNDED

The cramped conditions in a trench can be seen in this picture of an army medical officer tending a wounded soldier at Thiepval near the Somme in September 1916. Movement along a trench was often difficult and slow.



# Casualty

NO-ONE KNOWS how many soldiers were wounded in the war, but a possible figure is 21 million. Caring for casualties was a major military operation. They were first treated at regimental aid posts in the trenches. Then, they were taken to casualty clearing stations behind the front line. Here, they received proper medical attention and basic surgery, if required, before being transported to base hospitals still further from the front. Soldiers with severe injuries went home to recover in convalescent hospitals. Over 78% of British soldiers on the Western Front returned to active service. Sickness was a major cause of casualty – in Mesopotamia over 50% of deaths were due to disease.



**TRENCH AID**  
Injured soldiers had their wounds dressed by medical orderlies in the trench where they fell. They were then transferred to the regimental aid post, where their injuries could be assessed.

**RECYCLED BANDAGES**  
Following the naval blockade by Britain, Germany ran out of cotton and linen. Wood fibre, paper, and lace curtains were used to make bandages instead.

German bandages



**LUCKY MAN**  
Despite a splinter from a shell piercing his helmet, this soldier escaped with only a minor head wound. Many soldiers were not so fortunate, receiving severe injuries that stayed with them for life – if they survived at all.



Inventory listing contents and where to find them in the pouch

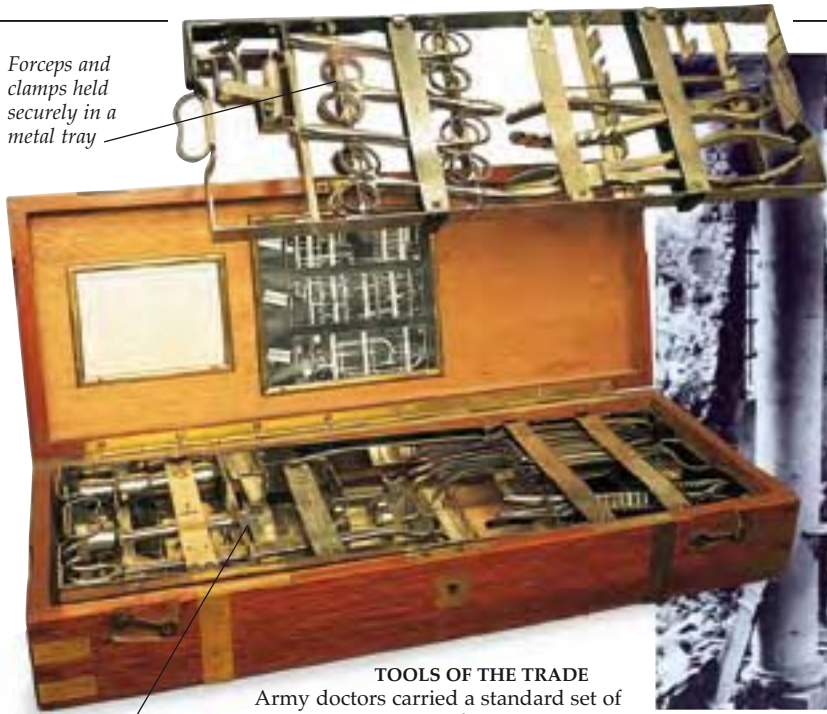
Bottles of liquid antiseptics and pain-killers

**THE GERMAN KIT**  
German *Sanitätsmannschaften* (medical orderlies) carried two first-aid pouches on their belts. The pouch on the right (above) contained basic antiseptics, pain-killers, and other treatments, while the pouch on the left contained dressings and triangular bandages.





Forceps and clamps held securely in a metal tray



Lower tray contains saws and knives for amputation

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE**  
Army doctors carried a standard set of surgical instruments, as in this set issued by the Indian army. Their skills were in great demand, as they faced a wide variety of injuries from bullets and shell fragments that required immediate attention.



**THE FIELD HOSPITAL**  
Farmhouses, ruined factories, and even bombed-out churches, such as this one in Meuse, France, were used as casualty clearing stations to treat the wounded. Care was basic, and many were left to help themselves.

## Shellshock

Shellshock is the collective name that was used to describe concussion, emotional shock, nervous exhaustion, and other similar ailments. Shellshock was not identified before World War I, but trench warfare was so horrific that large numbers of soldiers developed symptoms. Most of them eventually recovered, but some suffered nightmares and other effects for the rest of their lives. The condition caused great controversy, and in 1922 the British War Office Committee announced that shellshock did not exist and was a collection of already known illnesses.



A medical orderly helps a wounded soldier away from the trenches

Bunks for the injured to lie on

**AMBULANCE**  
The British Royal Army Medical Corps, like its German counterpart, had a fleet of field ambulances to carry the wounded to hospital. Many of these ambulances were staffed by volunteers, often women, and those from non-combatant countries such as the USA.



Red Cross symbol to signify non-combatant status of the ambulance

# Women at war

WHEN THE MEN went off to fight, the women were called upon to take their place. Many women were already in work, but their role was restricted to domestic labour, nursing, teaching, agricultural work on the family smallholding, and a few other jobs considered suitable for women. Now they went to work in factories, drove trucks and ambulances, and did almost everything that only men had done

before. Many working women left their low-paid, low-status jobs for higher-paid work in munitions and other industries, achieving a new status in the eyes of society. Such gains, however, were short-lived, as most women returned to the home when the war ended.



## FRONT-LINE ADVENTURE

For some women, the war was a big adventure. English nurse Elsie Knocker (above) went to Belgium in 1914 where she was joined by Scottish Mairi Chisholm. The women set up a dressing station at Pervyse, Belgium, and dressed the wounded until both were gassed in 1918. They were almost the only women on the front line. The two became known as the Women of Pervyse and were awarded the Order of Leopold by Belgian King Albert, and the British Military Medal. Elsie later married a Belgian officer, Baron de T'Sercles.



## ARMY LAUNDRY

Traditional pre-war women's work, such as working in a laundry or bakery, continued during the war on a much larger scale. The French women employed at this British Army laundry at Prevent, France in 1918 were washing and cleaning the dirty clothes of many thousands of soldiers every day.

## QUEEN MARY'S AUXILIARY

Few women actually fought in the war, but many were enlisted into auxiliary armies so that men could be released to fight on the front line. They drove trucks, mended engines, and did much of the necessary administration and supply work. In Britain, many women joined The Women's (later Queen Mary's) Army Auxiliary Corps, whose recruiting poster featured a khaki-clad woman (left) with the words "The girl behind the man behind the gun". The women remained civilians, despite their military work.



**WOMEN'S LAND ARMY**

The war required a huge increase in food production at home as both sides tried to restrict the enemy's imports of food from abroad. In Britain, 113,000 women joined the Women's Land Army, set up in February 1917 to provide a well-paid female workforce to run the farms. Many members of the Land Army, such as this group of healthy looking women, came from the middle and upper classes. They made a valuable contribution, but their numbers were insignificant compared with the millions of working-class women already employed on the land in the rest of Europe.



**RUSSIA'S AMAZONS**

A number of Russian women joined the "Legion of Death" to fight for their country. The first battalion from Petrograd (St Petersburg) distinguished itself by taking more than 100 German prisoners during a Russian retreat, although many of the women died in the battle.



Letters to men at the front describing events at home

Family photographs



Lace handkerchief



**SUPPORT YOUR COUNTRY**

Images of "ideal" women were used to gain support for a country's war effort. This Russian poster urges people to buy war bonds (fund-raising loans to the government) by linking Russian women to the love of the motherland.



**WORKING IN POVERTY**

The war brought increased status and wealth to many women but this was not the case everywhere. These Italian women worked in terrible conditions in a munitions factory. Many were very young and could not even afford shoes. This was common in factories across Italy, Germany, and Russia. The women worked long, hard hours but earned barely enough to feed their families. Strikes led by women were very common as a result.

**MEMENTOS FROM HOME**

Women kept in contact with their absent husbands, brothers, and sons by writing letters to them at the front. They also enclosed keepsakes, such as photographs or pressed flowers, to reassure the men that all was well in their absence and to remind them of home. Such letters and mementos did much to keep up the morale of homesick and often very frightened men.



**DOGFIGHTS**

Pilots engaged in dogfights with enemy aircraft above the Western Front. Guns were mounted on top of the craft, so pilots had to fly straight at the enemy to shoot.

# War in the air

WHEN WAR BROKE OUT in August 1914, the history of powered flight was barely 10 years old. Aircraft had fought briefly in the Italian-Turkish war of 1911, but early aircraft development had been almost entirely for civilian use. Some military leaders could not even see how aircraft could be used in war but they soon changed their minds. The first warplanes flew as reconnaissance craft, looking down on enemy lines or helping to direct artillery fire

with great precision. Enemy pilots tried to shoot them down, leading to dogfights in the sky between highly skilled and immensely brave "aces". Specialized fighter planes, such as the Sopwith Camel and the German Fokker line, were soon produced by both sides, as were sturdier craft capable of carrying bombs to drop on enemy targets.

By the end of the war, the role of military aircraft had changed from being a minor help to the ground forces into a major force in their own right.



Leather face mask



Anti-splinter glass goggles

Leather balaclava



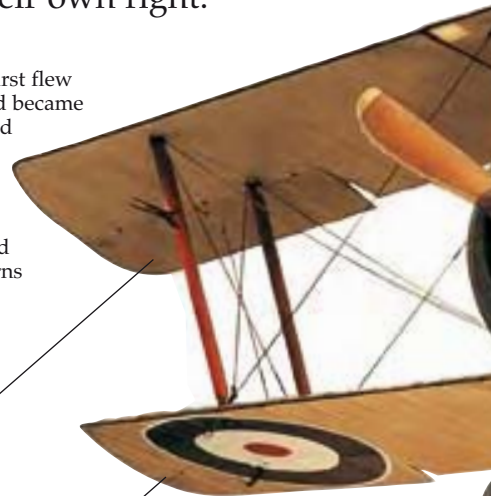
Turned-up collar to keep neck warm



Pouch to keep maps in

Coat of soft, supple leather

Wooden box-structure wings covered with canvas



8.2-m (26-ft 11-in) wingspan

Sheepskin-lined leather gloves to protect against frostbite



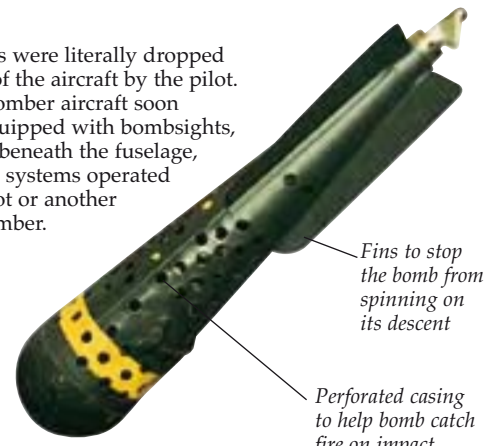
Propeller to guide the bomb

**BOMBS AWAY**

The first bombs were literally dropped over the side of the aircraft by the pilot. Specialized bomber aircraft soon appeared, equipped with bombsights, bomb racks beneath the fuselage, and release systems operated by the pilot or another crew member.



British 9.1-kg (20-lb) Marten Hale bomb, containing 2 kg (4.5 lb) of explosives



British Carcass incendiary bomb

Fins to stop the bomb from spinning on its descent

Perforated casing to help bomb catch fire on impact

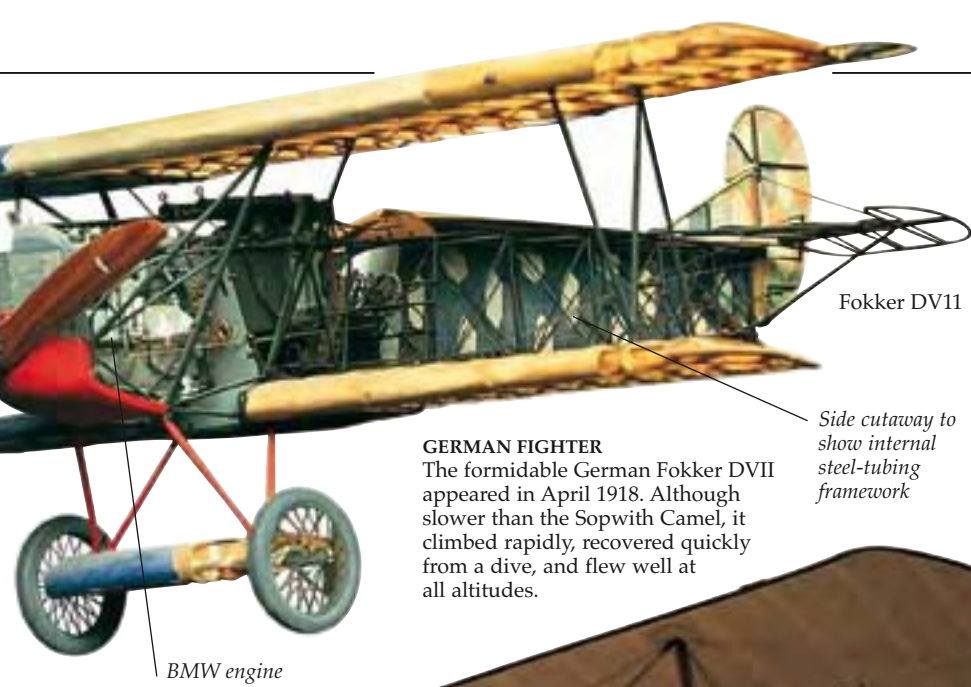
**DRESSED FOR THE AIR**

Pilots flew in open cockpits, so they wore soft leather coats and balaclavas, sheepskin-lined fur boots, and sheepskin-lined leather gloves to keep out the cold. Later in the war, one-piece suits of waxed cotton lined with silk and fur became common.

Sheepskin boots



Thick sole to give a good grip



Fokker DV11

**GERMAN FIGHTER**  
The formidable German Fokker DVII appeared in April 1918. Although slower than the Sopwith Camel, it climbed rapidly, recovered quickly from a dive, and flew well at all altitudes.

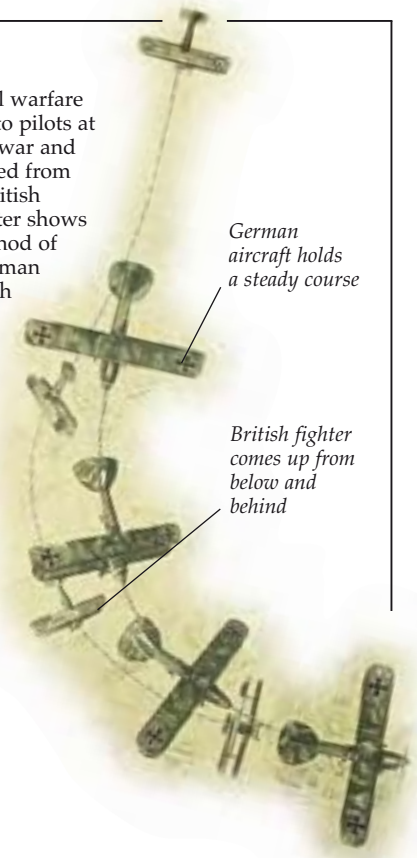
Side cutaway to show internal steel-tubing framework

BMW engine



Wooden struts

Symbol of British Royal Flying Corps, later the Royal Air Force



German aircraft holds a steady course

British fighter comes up from below and behind

*"You ask me to 'let the devils have it' ... when I fight ... I don't think them devils ... I only scrap because it is my duty."*

CAPTAIN ALBERT BALL, 1916

Captain René Fonck (France) – 75 hits (1894–1953)



Rittmeister Manfred von Richthofen (Germany), centre – 80 hits (1892–1918)



Captain Albert Ball (Britain) – 44 hits (1896–1917)

**AIR ACES**

To qualify as an air "ace", a pilot had to bring down at least 10 enemy aircraft. Those who did became national heroes. Baron von Richthofen – the "Red Baron" – was the highest-scoring ace of the war, shooting down 80 Allied aircraft. The British ace, Captain Albert Ball, had more decorations for bravery than any other man of his age, including the Victoria Cross; he was only 20 when he was shot down and killed in 1917.



Captain Eddie Rickenbacker (USA) – 24 ½ hits (1890–1973)

Pivot to change direction and angle of gun



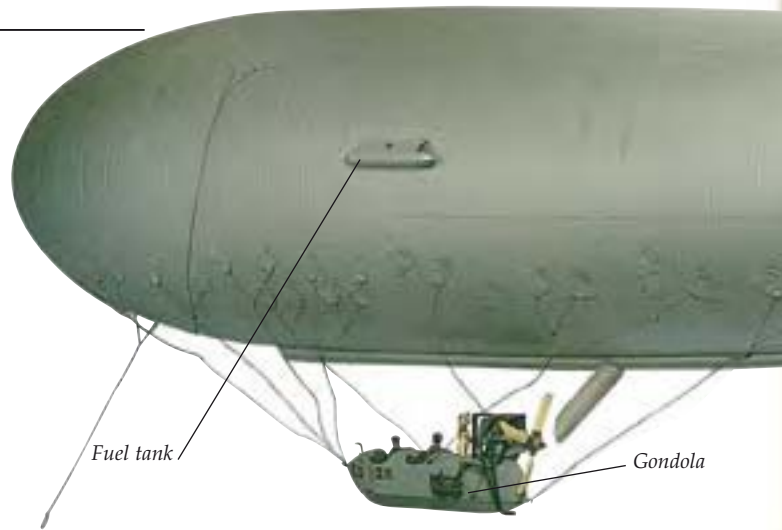
Barrel could fire 1-pound (453.6-g) shell

**ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS**

The first anti-aircraft guns, such as this British QF 1-pounder, were originally installed on ships to fire at torpedo boats. Once adapted for high-angle shooting, they became useful anti-aircraft guns on land.

# Zeppelin

IN THE SPRING OF 1915, the first German airships appeared in Britain's night sky. The sight of these huge, slow-moving machines caused enormous panic – at any moment a hail of bombs could fall from the airship. Yet in reality, airships played little part in the war. The first airship was designed by the German Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin in 1900. Airships are often called zeppelins, but technically only those designed by him should bear the name. Early in the war, airships could fly higher than planes, so it was almost impossible to shoot them down. This made them useful for bombing raids. But soon, higher flying aircraft and the use of incendiary (fire-making) bullets brought these aerial bombers down to earth. By 1917, most German and British airships were restricted to reconnaissance work at sea.



## INSIDE THE GONDOLA

The crew operated the airship from the gondola – a spacious cabin below the main airship. The gondola had open sides, so the crew had little protection from the weather.

## BOMBS AWAY!

Crews in the first airships had to drop their bombs, such as this incendiary bomb, over the side of the gondola by hand. Later models had automatic release mechanisms.

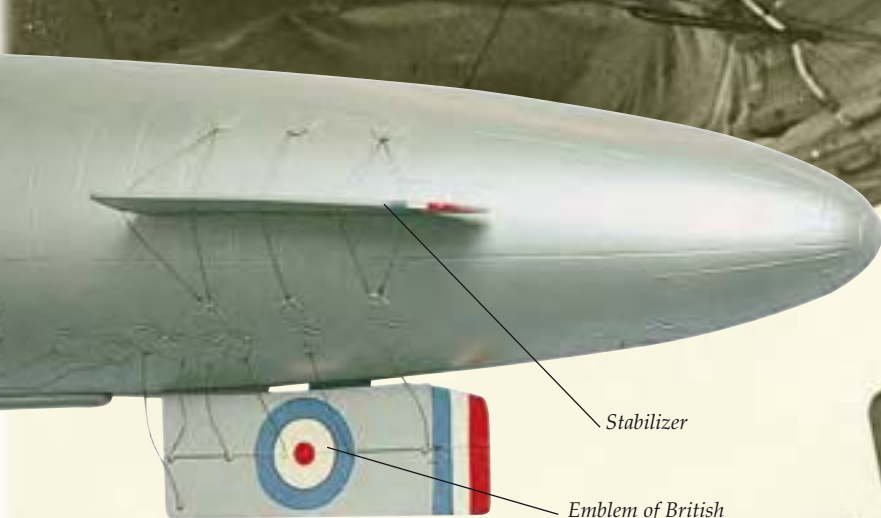


German incendiary bomb dropped by Zeppelin LZ38 on London, 31 May 1915

## GETTING BIGGER

This L3 German airship took part in the first airship raid on Britain on the night of 19–20 January 1915, causing 20 civilian casualties. Eyewitnesses were scared by its size, but by 1918 Germany was producing ships almost three times as big.





Stabilizer

Emblem of British Royal Naval Air Service

**SEA SCOUT ZERO**  
 The British SSZ (Sea Scout Zero) was first introduced into service in 1916. It was a non-rigid airship, meaning it had no internal framework. Its light weight gave it an impressive top speed of 72 km/h (45 mph) and it could stay airborne for 17 hours. Its crew of three were employed mainly on submarine patrol or on escort duty for convoys.

Observer

Engine and propeller to provide power and steer airship

The engine gantry was linked to the gondola by a rope ladder

Gantry

Float in case airship landed on sea

Lewis gunner

**HIGH ABOVE THE SEAS**  
 The British used airships chiefly to patrol the seas looking for German U-boats. The machine gunner protected the crew and ship against an enemy fighter, while other crew members were on look-out. These two crew members are perching on a flimsy gantry mounted to the side of the gondola strung beneath the airship.

**CAPITAL TARGET**  
 The first German airship raid on London took place on 31 May 1915, and was followed by a more powerful attack on 8 September. The artist R. Schmidt from Hamburg recorded one such night raid. In total, there were 51 airship attacks on British cities. They dropped 196 tons (2,000 kg) of bombs, killing 557 people and wounding 1,358.





**"I WANT YOU"**  
When the USA entered the war in April 1917, a poster showing an attractive woman in naval uniform (above) urged volunteers to enlist.

# War at sea

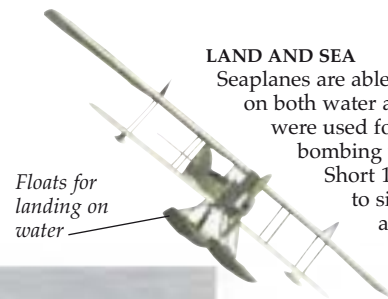
SINCE THE LAUNCH OF Britain's *Dreadnought* battleship in 1906, Britain, Germany, and other countries had engaged in a massive naval building programme. Yet the war itself was fought largely on land and both sides avoided naval conflict. The British needed their fleet to keep the seas open for merchant ships bringing food and other supplies to Britain, as well as to prevent supplies reaching Germany. Germany needed its fleet to protect itself against possible invasion. The only major sea battle – off Danish Jutland in the North Sea in 1916 – was inconclusive. The main fight took place under the sea, as German U-boats waged a damaging war against Allied merchant and troop ships in an effort to force Britain out of the war.



**LIFE INSIDE A U-BOAT**  
Conditions inside a U-boat were cramped and uncomfortable. Fumes and heat from the engine and poor ventilation made the air very stuffy. The crew had to navigate their craft through minefields, and avoid detection from reconnaissance aircraft, in order to attack enemy ships.



**CONSTANT THREAT**  
This German propaganda poster, *The U-boats are out!*, shows the threat posed to Allied shipping by the German U-boat fleet.



Floats for landing on water

**LAND AND SEA**  
Seaplanes are able to take off and land on both water and ground. They were used for reconnaissance and bombing work. This version of the Short 184 was the first seaplane to sink an enemy ship with a torpedo.



Observation balloon

Gun



**SUCCESS AND FAILURE**  
German U-boats operated both under the sea and on the surface. Here, the crew is opening fire with a deck cannon to stop an enemy steamer. German U-boats sank 5,554 Allied and neutral merchant ships as well as many warships. Their own losses, however, were also considerable. Out of a total fleet of 372 German U-boats, 178 were destroyed by Allied bombs or torpedoes.





**DAZZLED**

During the war, many artists contributed to their country's war effort, some in surprising ways. The modern British painter Edward Wadsworth supervised the application of "dazzle" camouflage to ships' hulls. He later painted a picture (above), *Dazzle ships in dry dock at Liverpool*, showing the finished result.



**CONFUSE AND SURVIVE**

In 1917 the British Admiralty began to camouflage merchant ships with strange and garish designs. These grey, black, and blue geometric patterns distorted the silhouette of the ship and made it difficult for German U-boats to determine its course and thus aim torpedoes at it with any accuracy. More than 2,700 merchant ships and 400 convoy escorts were camouflaged in this way before the war ended.

Medals awarded to Jack Cornwall



Victoria Cross (VC)    British War Medal    Victory Medal

**BOY (1ST CLASS)**

John Travers Cornwall was only 16 when he first saw action at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916. He was a ship's boy (1st class) aboard HMS *Chester* and was mortally wounded early in the battle. While other crew members lay dead or injured, Cornwall stayed at his post until the end of the action. He died of his wounds on 2 June and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.



**THE BRITISH GRAND FLEET**

The British Royal Navy was the biggest and most powerful in the world. It operated a policy known as the "two-power standard" – the combined might of the British fleet should be the equal of the two next strongest nations combined. Despite this superiority, the navy played a fairly minor role in the war compared with the army, keeping the seas free of German ships and escorting convoys of merchant ships to Britain.



**HMS FURIOUS**

Aircraft carriers first saw service during World War I. On 7 July 1918, seven Sopwith Camels took off from the deck of HMS *Furious* to attack the zeppelin base at Tondern in northern Germany, destroying both sheds and the two Zeppelins inside.





**TASTY GREETINGS**

British army biscuits were often easier to write on than to eat, as this hard-baked Christmas card from Gallipoli illustrates.

# Gallipoli

IN EARLY 1915 the Allies decided to force through the strategic, but heavily fortified, Dardanelles straits and capture the Ottoman Turkish capital of Constantinople. Naval attacks on 19 February and 18 March both failed. On 25 April, British, Australian, and New Zealand troops landed on the

Gallipoli peninsula, while French troops staged a diversion to their south. In August, there was a second landing at Suvla Bay, also on the peninsula. Although the landings were a success, the casualty rate was high and the Allies were unable to move far from the beaches due to fierce Turkish resistance. As the months wore on, the death rate mounted. The Allies eventually withdrew in January 1916, leaving the Ottoman Empire still in control of the Dardanelles and still in the war.



**GALLIPOLI PENINSULA**

The Gallipoli peninsula lies to the north of the Dardanelles, a narrow waterway connecting the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea via the Sea of Marmara. Control of this waterway would have given Britain and France a direct sea route from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea and their ally, Russia. But both sides of the waterway were controlled by Germany's ally, the Ottoman Empire.



*Jetty for boats carrying sick and wounded soldiers*

**THE SICK BEACH**

Both sides had their food contaminated by flies carrying disease from the many corpses. Dysentery was endemic – in September 1915, 78% of the Anzac troops in the No. 1 Australian Stationary Hospital at Anzac Cove (above) were being treated for the disease.

**GERMAN HELP**

The Allies expected the Gallipoli peninsula to be lightly defended, but with the help of Germany, the Turks had built strong defensive positions. They dug trenches, erected barbed-wire fences, and built well-guarded artillery positions. Germany also equipped the Turks with modern pistols, rifles, and machine guns.



**IMPROVISED GRENADES**

The fighting at Gallipoli was often at very close range. Hand-thrown grenades were particularly effective in knocking out enemy positions. During a munitions shortage, Allied troops improvised by making grenades out of jam tins.

Privately purchased medical kit used by a British officer on the front line



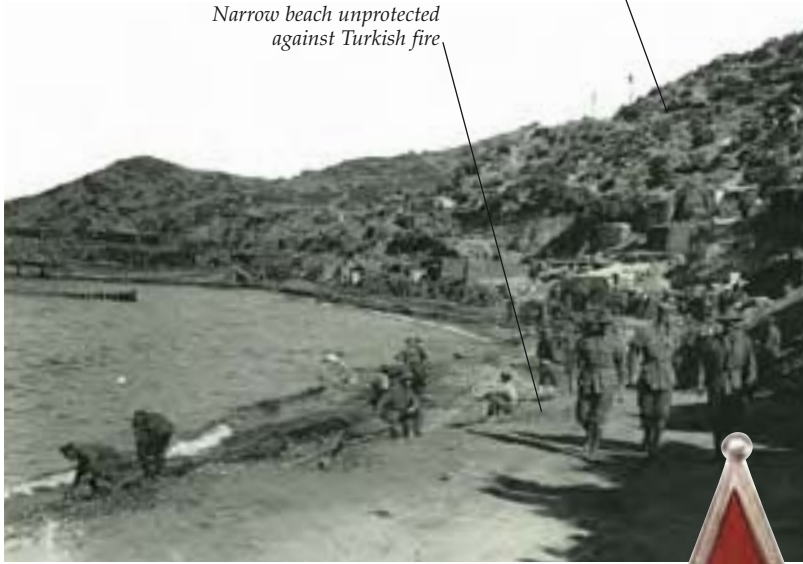
**THE CASUALTY RATE**

Despite the efforts of the medical staff, some of whom even carried portable surgical kits, the treatment and evacuation of casualties from Gallipoli was complicated by the enormous numbers of soldiers who were sick, as well as those who were wounded.



Turkish defences look down on beach

Narrow beach unprotected against Turkish fire



### KEMAL ATATURK

Born in 1881, Mustafa Kemal distinguished himself fighting for the Ottoman Turkish army in Libya in 1911 and against the Bulgarians in 1912-13. At Gallipoli, Kemal was appointed divisional commander where he helped to strengthen the Ottoman Turkish defences. Kemal then brilliantly led the 19th Division on the ridges above Anzac Cove, preventing the Allies from penetrating inland. After the war, Kemal led a revolt to prevent the dismemberment of Turkey. In 1923 he became the first president of the Turkish Republic, later gaining the name Atatürk (Father of the Turks).



### ANZAC COVE

On 25 April, the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, known as the Anzacs, landed on the western coast of the Gallipoli peninsula. All hopes of swiftly capturing the peninsula were thwarted by the unyielding terrain. The beach was very narrow and the steep, sandy hills gave the men no cover. They were under constant fire from the well-hidden Ottoman Turks above. The beach is now known as Anzac Cove as a sign of remembrance.



Hyde Park Memorial, Sydney, Australia



Sultan's Cypher with the year 1333 in the Muslim calendar, which is 1915 in the Western calendar

### FOR DISTINCTION

The Turkish Order of the Crescent was instituted on 1 March 1915 for distinguished service. It was awarded to German and Turkish soldiers who fought at Gallipoli.

### ANZAC MEMORIAL

During the war, both Australia and New Zealand suffered large numbers of deaths in proportion to their small populations. Australia lost 60,000 men from a population of less than five million. New Zealand lost 17,000 from a population of one million. Of those, 11,100 died at Gallipoli. Today, Australia and New Zealand remember their war dead on Anzac Day, 25 April.

### WINTER EVACUATION

On 7 December 1915, the Allies decided to withdraw from Gallipoli. A flotilla of ships evacuated the troops and their supplies. Unlike the chaos and carnage of the previous six months, the withdrawals under the cover of darkness went without a hitch and not a single person was injured. British and Anzac forces withdrew from Anzac and Suvla on the night of 18-19 December, with the rest of the British forces at Cape Helles following on 8-9 January 1916.

Many soldiers were suffering from frostbite

Large horse-drawn gun

British soldiers evacuated by raft from Suvla Bay, 19 December 1915



# Verdun



## BURNING WRECKAGE

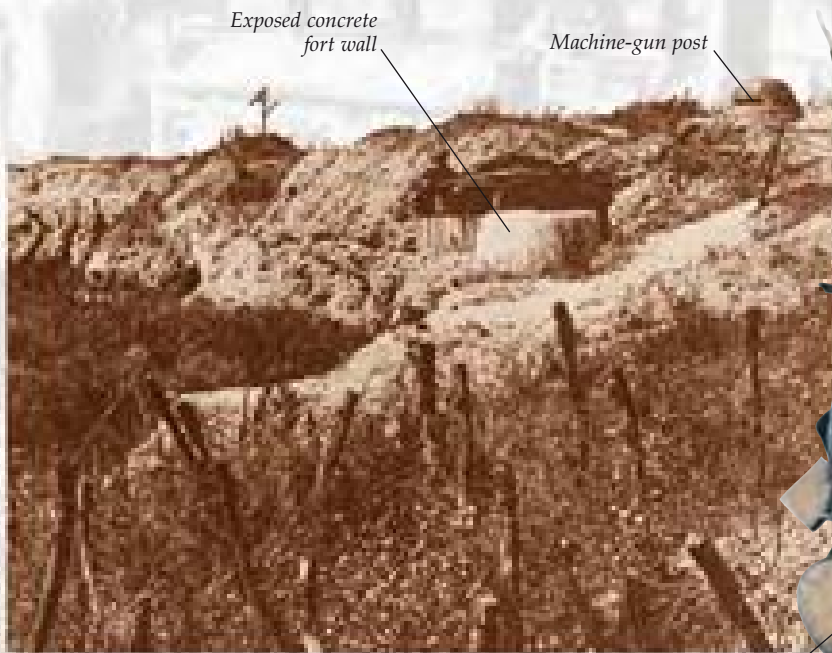
On 25 February, the ancient city of Verdun was evacuated. Many buildings were hit by the artillery bombardment, and even more destroyed by the fires that raged often for days. Firefighters did their best to control the blazes, but large numbers of houses had wooden frames and burned easily.

ON 21 FEBRUARY 1916, Germany launched a massive attack against Verdun, a fortified French city. Verdun lay close to the German border and controlled access into eastern France. After a huge, eight-hour artillery bombardment, the German infantry advanced. The French were caught by surprise and lost control of some of their main forts, but during the summer their resistance stiffened. By December, the Germans had been pushed back almost to where they started. The cost to both sides was enormous – over 400,000 French casualties and 336,831 German casualties. The German General Falkenhayn later claimed he had tried to bleed France to death. He did not succeed and, including losses at the Battle of the Somme, German casualties that year were 774,153.



## GENERAL PETAIN

General Henri-Philippe Pétain took command of the French forces of Verdun on 25 February, the same day as the loss of Fort Douaumont. He organized an effective defence of the town and made sure the army was properly supplied. His rallying cry, "Ils ne passeront pas!" (They shall not pass!), did much to raise French morale.



Exposed concrete fort wall

Machine-gun post

## FORT DOUAUMONT

Verdun was protected by three rings of fortifications. Fort Douaumont, in the outer ring, was the strongest of these forts. It was built of steel and concrete and surrounded by ramparts, ditches, and rolls of barbed wire. But although the fort itself was strong, it was defended by just 56 elderly reservists. The fort fell to the Germans on 25 February.

Background picture: Ruined Verdun cityscape, 1915



Double-breasted greatcoat

Horizon-blue uniform

Haversack

Lebel rifle

Steel helmet

Thick boots with puttees wrapped around the legs

## LE POILU

The French slang for an infantry soldier was *le poilu*, or "hairy one". *Les poilus* bore the brunt of the German attack, enduring the muddy, cold, and wet conditions and suffering dreadful injuries from shellfire and poison gas.



**AT CLOSE QUARTERS**

Fighting at Verdun was particularly fierce, as both sides repeatedly attacked and counter-attacked the same forts and strategic areas around the city. Advancing attackers were assaulted by hails of machine-gun fire from the enemy within the forts. The open ground was so exposed that it was impossible to retrieve the dead, and corpses were left to rot in the ground. The forts were also riddled with underground tunnels where both sides engaged in vicious hand-to-hand combat. Many dramatic films have been made about the war, and this photograph comes from one such film.



**SURROUNDING VILLAGES**

The village of Ornes was one of many French villages attacked and captured during the German advance on Verdun. The devastation was so great that this village, along with eight others, was not rebuilt after the war, but is still marked on maps as a sign of remembrance.

*“What a bloodbath, what horrid images, what a slaughter. I just cannot find the words to express my feelings. Hell cannot be this dreadful.”*

ALBERT JOUBAIRE  
FRENCH SOLDIER, VERDUN, 1916



**THE MUDDY INFERNO**

The countryside around Verdun is wooded and hilly, with many streams running down to the River Meuse. Heavy rainfall and constant artillery bombardment turned this landscape into a desolate mudbath, where the bodies of the dead lay half-buried in shell craters and men were forced to eat and sleep within centimetres of their fallen comrades. This photograph shows the “Ravine de la mort”, the Ravine of the Dead.



Laurel-leaf wreath

Oak-leaf wreath

Head of Marianne,  
symbol of France

**LEGIION D'HONNEUR**

In recognition of the suffering experienced by Verdun's people, French president Raymond Poincaré awarded the city the *Légion d'Honneur*. The honour is usually presented to men and women, military and civilian, for bravery.

# Gas attack



British "Hypo" helmet

ON THE AFTERNOON of 22 April 1915, French-Algerian troops near the Belgian town of Ypres noticed a greenish-yellow cloud moving towards them from the German front. The cloud was chlorine gas. This was the first time poison gas had been used effectively in war. As it reached the Allied line, many soldiers panicked, for they had no protection against its choking effects. Over the next three years, both sides used gas – the Germans released about 68,000 tonnes, the British and French 51,000 tonnes.

The first gas clouds were released from canisters and blown by the wind towards the enemy, but this caused problems if the wind changed and blew the gas in the wrong direction. More effective were gas-filled shells, which could be targeted at enemy lines. In total, 1,200,000 soldiers on both sides were gassed, of whom 91,198 died terrible deaths.

## EARLY WARNING

The first anti-gas masks were crude and often ineffectual, as these instructional drawings from a British training school show. Basic goggles protected the eyes, while mouth-pads made of flannel or other absorbent materials were worn over the mouth. Chemicals soaked into the pads neutralized the gas.



British anti-gas goggles



Black veil respirator



Flannel respirator



British smallbox respirator

## ALL-IN-ONE

By the middle of the war, both sides wore fully protective helmets, which consisted of face masks, goggles, and respirators. These protected the eyes, nose, and throat from the potentially lethal effects of gas.

## GASSED!

The full horror of being blinded by gas is caught in *Gassed*, a painting from real life by the American artist John Singer Sargent. Led by their sighted colleagues, the blinded soldiers are slowly shuffling towards a dressing station near Arras in northern France in August 1918.





**GAS SHELLS**

Gas shells contained liquid gas, which evaporated on impact. Gases caused a range of injuries depending on their type. Gases such as chlorine, diphosgene, and phosgene caused severe breathing difficulties while benzyl bromide caused the eyes to water. Dichlorethylsulphide burned and blistered the skin, caused temporary blindness and, if inhaled, flooded the lungs and led to death from pneumonia.



*Glove shrunken by gas*

*Ordinary glove*

**UNDER ATTACK**

The first effects of gas were felt on the face and in the eyes, but within seconds it entered the throat. Soldiers coughed and choked as the gas swirled around them. The longterm effects depended on the type of gas used – some soldiers died very quickly, others were blinded for life or suffered awful skin blisters, while some died a lingering death as their lungs collapsed and filled with liquid. The only protection was to wear combined goggles and respirator. Major Tracy Evert photographed these American soldiers in 1918. They are posing to illustrate the ill effects of forgetting their gas masks. The photograph was used when training new recruits.



**HAND SHRUNK**

When exposed to some kinds of gas, a glove like the one above will shrink to the size of the glove above, right. This is what happens to a person's lungs when exposed to the same gas.

*German gas mask*

*Eyes not protected*

*Canvas-covered respirator*



**ANIMAL WELFARE**

Every living creature was vulnerable to gas, including the many thousands of horses used by both sides to transport men, equipment, and supplies. Here, both German rider and horse have got their gas masks on, although the horse's eyes remain unprotected and vulnerable.





#### TANNENBERG, 1914

In August 1914, Russia's First and Second armies invaded East Prussia, Germany. The Russians did not disguise their messages in code, so the Germans knew what to expect. The Second Army was soon surrounded at Tannenberg and was forced to surrender on 31 August, with the loss of 150,000 men and all of its artillery (above).

# The Eastern Front

WHEN PEOPLE THINK today of World War I, they picture the fighting in the trenches along the Western Front. But on the other side of Europe, a very different war took place, between Germany and Austria-Hungary on one side and Russia on the other. This war was much more fluid, with great armies marching backwards and forwards across many hundreds of kilometres. Both the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies were badly led and poorly equipped, and both suffered huge losses. In 1915 alone, the Russians lost two million men, of



#### MASURIAN LAKES, 1914

In September 1914, the Russian First Army had marched to the Masurian Lakes in East Prussia. It was in danger of being surrounded as the Second Army had been the previous month at Tannenberg. German troops dug trenches and other defences (above) and attacked the Russians, who soon withdrew, sustaining more than 100,000 casualties. By the end of September, the Russian threat to Germany was over.

whom one million were taken prisoner. The German army, ably led by General Hindenburg, was far more effective. By the end of 1916, despite some Russian successes, the Germans were in full control of the entire Eastern Front. The Russians were greatly demoralized and this led, in part, to the Russian Revolution the following year, 1917.



#### INITIAL SUCCESS

During 1914 the Russian army conquered Austria-Hungary's eastern province of Galicia, inflicting huge defeats on the Austro-Hungarian army. But, in 1915, German reinforcements (above) pushed the Russians back into their own country.







**UNWILLING TO FIGHT**

By the end of 1916, many Russian soldiers were refusing to fight. They were badly treated, ill-equipped, poorly led, and starving. They saw little reason to risk their lives in a war they did not believe in. Officers had to threaten their troops to make them fight, and mutinies were common, although many thousands simply deserted and went home.

Below: Russian troops marching to defend the newly captured city of Przemysl in Austrian Galicia



# The Italian Front

On 23 May 1915, Italy joined the war on the side of the Allies and prepared to invade its hostile neighbour, Austria-Hungary. Fighting took place on two fronts – north and east. Italy fought against the Italian-speaking Trentino region of Austria-Hungary to the north, and along the Isonzo River to the east. The Italian army was ill-prepared and under-equipped for the war, and was unable to break through the Austrian defences until its final success at the Battle of Vittorio-Veneto in October 1918.

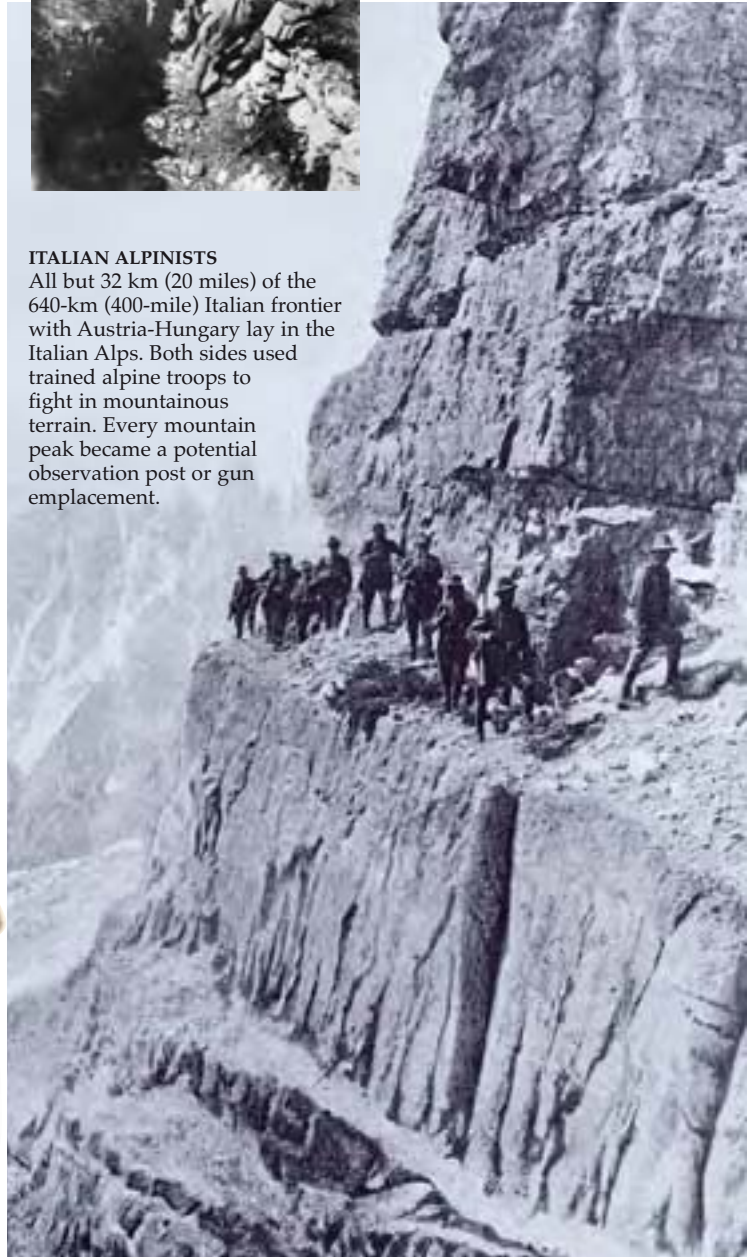


**THE ISONZO**

The Isonzo River formed a natural boundary between the mountains of Austria-Hungary and the plains of northern Italy. Between June 1915 and August 1917, the two sides fought 11 inconclusive battles along the river before the Austrians, with German support, achieved a decisive victory at Caporetto in December 1917.

**ITALIAN ALPINISTS**

All but 32 km (20 miles) of the 640-km (400-mile) Italian frontier with Austria-Hungary lay in the Italian Alps. Both sides used trained alpine troops to fight in mountainous terrain. Every mountain peak became a potential observation post or gun emplacement.



# War in the desert

FIGHTING DURING World War I was not restricted just to Europe. German colonies in Africa were overrun by French, British, and South African forces, while Germany's colonies in China and the Pacific were invaded by Japanese, British, Australian, and New Zealand forces. One of the major conflicts took place in the Middle East. Here, the Turkish Ottoman Empire controlled Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), Palestine, Syria, and Arabia. British and Indian troops invaded Mesopotamia in 1914 and finally captured Baghdad in 1917. Meanwhile, a large British force, under General Allenby, captured Palestine and, in the last weeks of the war, the Syrian capital of Damascus. In Arabia, Bedouin soldiers under the guidance of T.E. Lawrence rose in revolt against their Turkish rulers and waged a guerrilla campaign for an independent Arab state.



## SPINE PAD

The British army was concerned that soldiers fighting in the desert might get heatstroke. They therefore issued spine pads to protect the soldiers' backs from the sun. The weight and discomfort of the pad would have done little to keep the body cool.



Arab flintlock pistol



Lawrence's rifle

Lawrence's initials

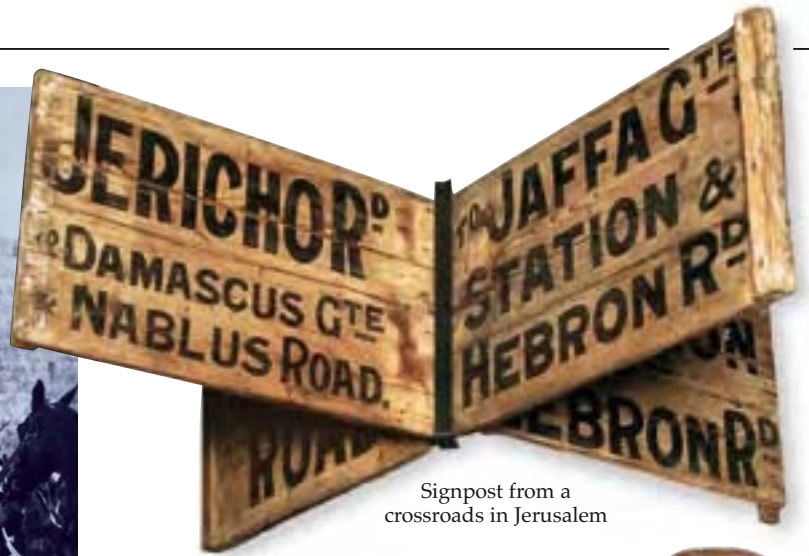
## RETURN JOURNEY

British soldier T.E. Lawrence's rifle was one of the many British rifles captured by the Turks at Gallipoli in 1915. It was then given by the Turkish War Minister, Enver Pasha, to the Arab leader, Emir Feisal, who in turn presented it to Lawrence in December 1916.

## LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

The British soldier T.E. Lawrence is a romantic, almost legendary figure known as Lawrence of Arabia. Lawrence first visited the Middle East in 1909, and learned to speak Arabic. In 1914 he became an army intelligence officer in Cairo, Egypt. Later, he worked as liaison officer to Emir Feisal, leader of the Arab revolt against Ottoman Turkish rule. Lawrence helped the Arabs to become an effective guerrilla force, blowing up railway lines, attacking Turkish garrisons, and tying down an army many times their own size.





Signpost from a crossroads in Jerusalem

**FIGHTING IN PALESTINE**

In early 1917, Britain opened a new front against Ottoman Turkey. British troops invaded Palestine and, after early failures, General Allenby captured and entered Jerusalem on 11 December 1917 (left). After a pause, fighting resumed in autumn 1918. British troops pushed north towards Damascus, while an Arab army under Lawrence continued to attack the Turks in the desert. Both armies entered Damascus on 1 October 1918. Within a month, Ottoman Turkey had surrendered.



Swat made of perforated, flexible leather

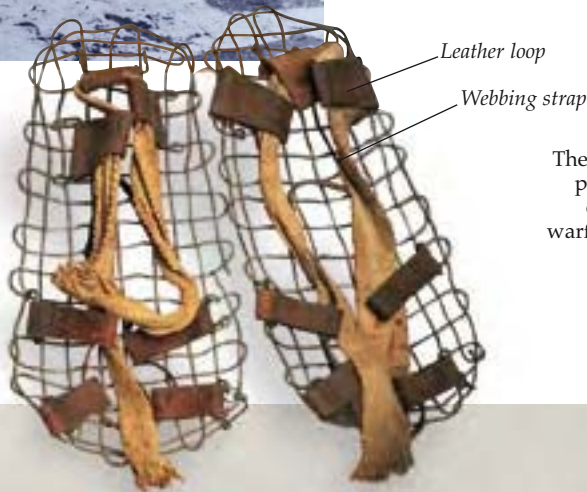
**FLY SWAT**

The British army made sure its personnel were issued with every necessity for desert warfare, including fly swats!

Wire strap

**SAND SHOES**

Walking across soft, shifting sand in regular army boots was very tiring. These British wire sand shoes were worn over the boot and tied in place with webbing straps. They helped spread the soldier's weight, so he did not sink in the sand.



Leather loop

Webbing strap



**MARCH TO BAGHDAD**

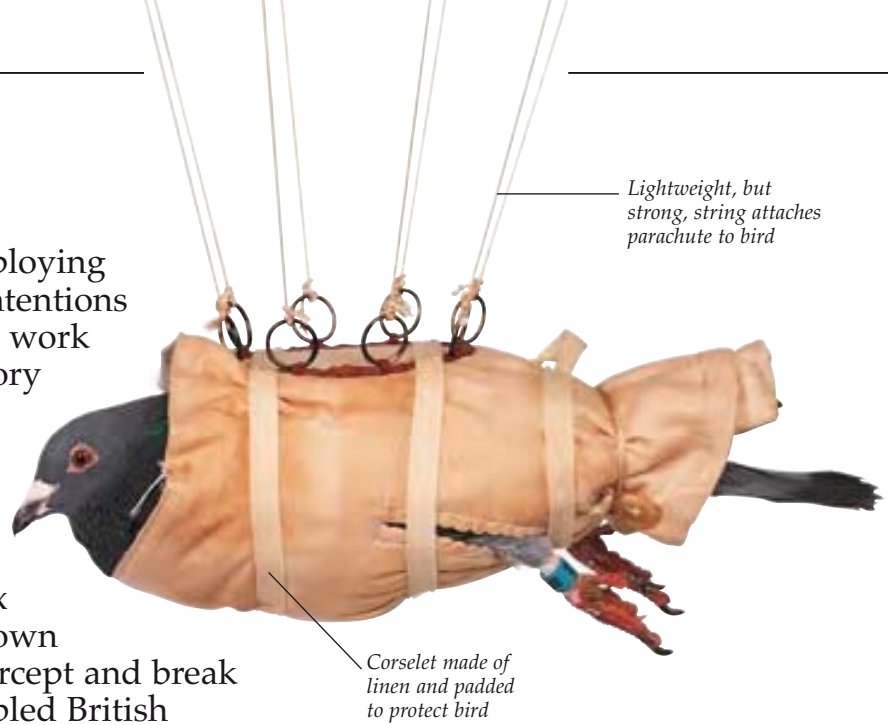
Turkish-held Mesopotamia was rich in oil, which Britain needed to supply her navy with fuel. In November 1914 Britain sent troops to protect her interests in the oil fields of Basra in Mesopotamia. The commander, General Townshend, then decided to advance up the Tigris River towards Baghdad. But his men were ill-prepared for a long campaign, and in April 1916 their garrison at Kut al-Amarah was forced to surrender to Turkish troops, seen here crossing a pontoon bridge in Baghdad. The British finally captured Baghdad in March 1917.



German sign celebrating the fall of the Kut

# Espionage

**BOTH SIDES SUSPECTED** the other of employing hundreds of spies to report on enemy intentions and capabilities. In fact, most espionage work consisted not of spying on enemy territory but of eavesdropping on enemy communications. Code-breaking or cryptography was very important as both sides sent and received coded messages by radio and telegraph. Cryptographers devised highly complex codes to ensure the safe transit of their own messages while using their skills to intercept and break coded enemy messages. Such skills enabled British intelligence to decipher the Zimmermann telegram from Berlin to Washington sent in January 1917, leading to the entry of the USA into the war in April 1917.



## PIGEON POST

Over 500,000 pigeons were used during the war to carry messages between intelligence agents and their home bases. The pigeons were dropped by parachute into occupied areas. Agents collected the pigeons at drop zones and looked after them until they had information to send home. When released, the birds flew home to their lofts with messages attached to their legs.



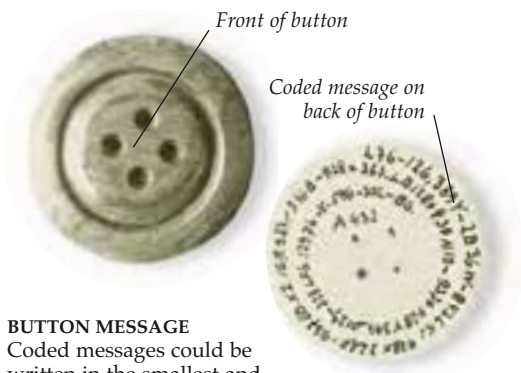
## EDITH CAVELL

Edith Cavell was born in England and worked as a governess in Belgium in the early 1890s before training in England as a nurse. In 1907 she returned to Belgium to start a nursing school in Brussels (above). When the Germans occupied the city in August 1914 she decided to stay, accommodating up to 200 British soldiers who also found themselves behind enemy lines. The Germans arrested her and tried her for "conducting soldiers to the enemy". She was found guilty and executed by firing squad in October 1915. Cavell was not a spy, but her execution did provide a powerful propaganda weapon for the Allies.



## IN MINIATURE

Pigeons could not carry much weight, so messages had to be written on small pieces of paper. This message, in German, is written on a standard "pigeon post" form used by the German army. Long messages could be photographed with a special camera that reduced them to the size of a microdot – that is 300 hundred times smaller than the original.



## BUTTON MESSAGE

Coded messages could be written in the smallest and most unobtrusive of places. During the war, messages were stamped on to the back of buttons sewn on to coats or jackets.



German invisible ink and sponge



Invisible ink bottle

## SECRET INK

Invisible ink was used to conceal messages written on paper. The invisible message could be read later when the paper was treated with a chemical to make the words visible.

Lens cap

**POCKET CAMERA**

Small cameras hidden in a pocket or disguised as a fob watch were used to take clandestine photographs.

This spy camera saw service in German East Africa (now Tanzania).



Camera lens

Shutter release



**READING THE ENEMY**

Army intelligence officers, such as this British soldier, played a vital role in examining and understanding captured enemy documents. Painstaking reading of every piece of information enabled the intelligence services to build up a reasonably complete picture about enemy preparations for an attack. They could also assess the state of civilian morale, and pass that information on to the military high command.

**HIDDEN MESSAGES**

Not every spy remained undetected. Two agents from the Netherlands sent to Portsmouth, England, to spy for Germany pretended to be cigar importers. They used their orders for imported Dutch cigars as codes for the ships they observed in Portsmouth Harbour. They were caught and executed in 1915.



Cigars slit open in search of hidden messages

**AID TO ESCAPE**

This tin, supposedly containing ox tongue, was sent to British Lieutenant Jack Shaw at the German Prisoner of War Camp, Holzminden in 1918. It contained maps, wire cutters, and compasses to help Shaw arrange a mass escape from the camp.



Rolled-up map of France



Lead weights to make the tin the correct weight

Compass

**MATA HARI**

Dutch-born Margaretha Zelle was a famous dancer who used the stage-name Mata Hari. She had many high-ranking lovers, which enabled her to pass on any confidential information she acquired from them to the secret services. In 1914, while dancing in Paris, she was recruited by the French intelligence service. She went to Madrid, where she tried to win over a German diplomat. He double-crossed her with false information and on her return to France she was arrested, tried, and found guilty of being a German agent. She was executed by firing squad in October 1917.



# Tank warfare

THE BRITISH-INVENTED tank was a major mechanical innovation of the war. British tanks first saw action in September 1916, but these early tanks were not very reliable. It was not until November 1917, at the Battle of Cambrai, that their full potential was realized. At Cambrai, the German defences were so strong that an artillery bombardment would have destroyed the ground and made it impossible for the infantry to cross. Instead, fleets of tanks flattened barbed-wire, crossed enemy trenches, and acted as shields for the advancing infantry. Tanks played a vital role in the allied advances throughout 1918.



Stabilizer wheels

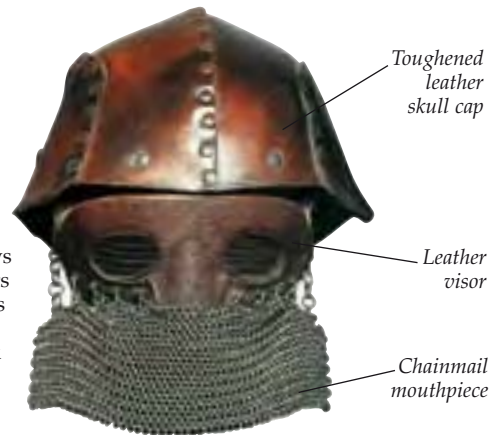
## BRITISH MARK I HEAVY TANK

The first tank to fight in battle was the British Mark 1 tank. Forty-nine were ready to fight at the Battle of the Somme on 15 September 1916, but only 18 were reliable enough to take part in the battle itself.

Carried crew of eight men

Total weight of 28,450 kg (28 tons)

Equipped with two 6-pounder guns and four machine guns



Toughened leather skull cap

Leather visor

Chainmail mouthpiece

## PROTECT AND SURVIVE

Leather helmets, faceguards, and chainmail mouthpieces were issued to British tank crews to protect their heads. The visors gave protection against particles of hot metal which flew off the inside of the hull when the tank was hit by a bullet.

German A7V tank



## A7V TANK

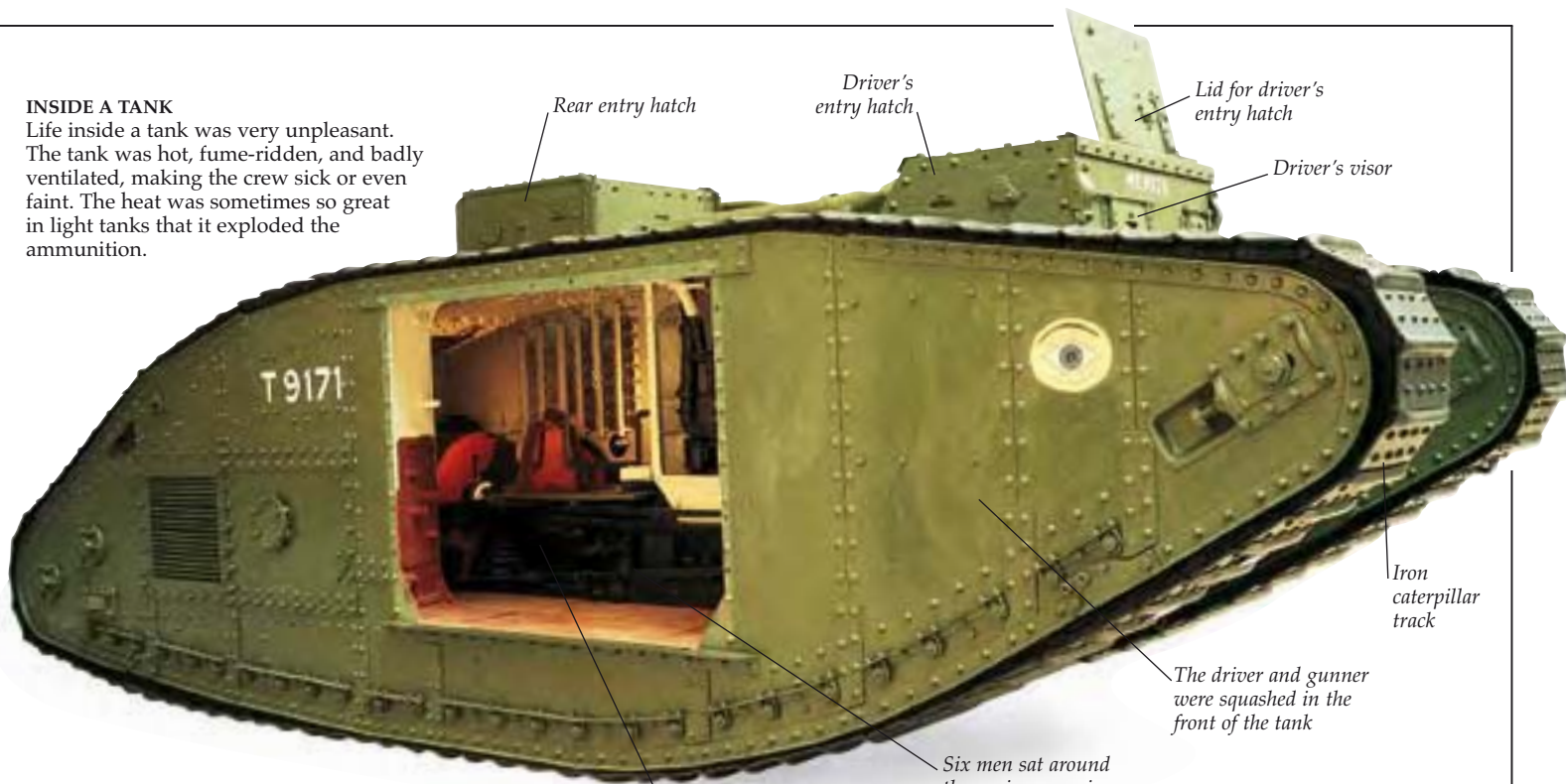
The only German tank built during the war was the huge A7V, a 33,500-kg (33-ton) machine with six machine guns and a crew of 18. Only 20 A7Vs were constructed, and their appearance in spring 1918 was too late in the war to make any real impact.

British Mark V tank



### INSIDE A TANK

Life inside a tank was very unpleasant. The tank was hot, fume-ridden, and badly ventilated, making the crew sick or even faint. The heat was sometimes so great in light tanks that it exploded the ammunition.



Rear entry hatch

Driver's entry hatch

Lid for driver's entry hatch

Driver's visor

Iron caterpillar track

The driver and gunner were squashed in the front of the tank

Six men sat around the engine manning the guns

Six-cylinder engine

### BRITISH MARK V TANK

The British Mark V tank first saw action in July 1918. It was equipped with two 6-pounder guns and four machine guns, and had a crew of eight. Its advanced system of gears and brakes allowed it to be driven and controlled by only one person.

Machine-gun port



### DRIVING A TANK

The first British tanks were driven by two people, each controlling one track. They had a limited range of 40 km (24 miles) and their tracks broke regularly. Later tanks were driven by a single person and were more manoeuvrable and robust. However, they were still vulnerable to enemy shellfire, and often broke down, as here during the British assault on Arras in April 1917.



### CROSSING THE TRENCHES

A tank could cross a narrow trench easily, but it could topple into a wide one. To solve this problem, the British equipped their tanks with circular metal bundles that could be dropped into a trench to form a bridge. Here, a line of Mark V tanks are moving in to attack German trenches during autumn 1918.



# The US enters the war



## UNCLE SAM

The artist James Montgomery Flagg used himself as a model for Uncle Sam, a cartoon figure intended to represent every American. The portrait was based on Kitchener's similar pose for British recruiting posters (see page 14). Beneath his pointing finger were the words "I WANT YOU FOR THE US ARMY".

WHEN WAR broke out in Europe in August 1914, the USA remained neutral. The country was deeply divided about the war, as many of its citizens had recently arrived from Europe and were strongly in favour of one side or the other. When German U-boats started to sink American ships, however, public opinion began to turn against Germany. In February 1917, Germany decided to attack all foreign shipping to try to reduce supplies to Britain. It also tried to divert US attention from Europe by encouraging its neighbour, Mexico, to invade. This action outraged the US government, and as more US ships were sunk, President Wilson declared war on Germany. This was now a world war.



British medal suggesting the attack on SS *Lusitania* was planned

## SS LUSITANIA

On 7 May 1915 the passenger ship *SS Lusitania* was sunk off the coast of Ireland by German torpedoes because the ship was suspected of carrying munitions. The ship was bound from New York, USA, to Liverpool, England. Three-quarters of the passengers drowned, including 128 US citizens. Their death did much to turn the US public against Germany and towards the Allies.



## PRESIDENT WILSON

Woodrow Wilson was a distinguished academic before he was elected president of the USA in 1912. As a war leader, he was principled and strong, but he was too idealistic and failed to get Congress to support the post-war peace treaty or the new League of Nations, which was designed to prevent another world war. In 1919 Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in bringing peace to Europe.



## INFANTRY EQUIPMENT

A US infantryman went to the Western Front prepared for every eventuality. Around his waist he wore a cartridge belt filled with ammunition, a water bottle, and a basic first aid kit. On his back he carried a heavy pack with a bayonet, an entrenching tool, a blanket, and his personal kit, which included a mess tin and essential toiletries.



**GUN FIRE**

The US First Army saw its first major action on 12–16 September 1918 at St Mihiel, south of Verdun, France, as part of a combined Allied attack against German lines. Here an artillery crew fires a 75-mm (2.9-in) field gun as a spent shell-case flies through the air.

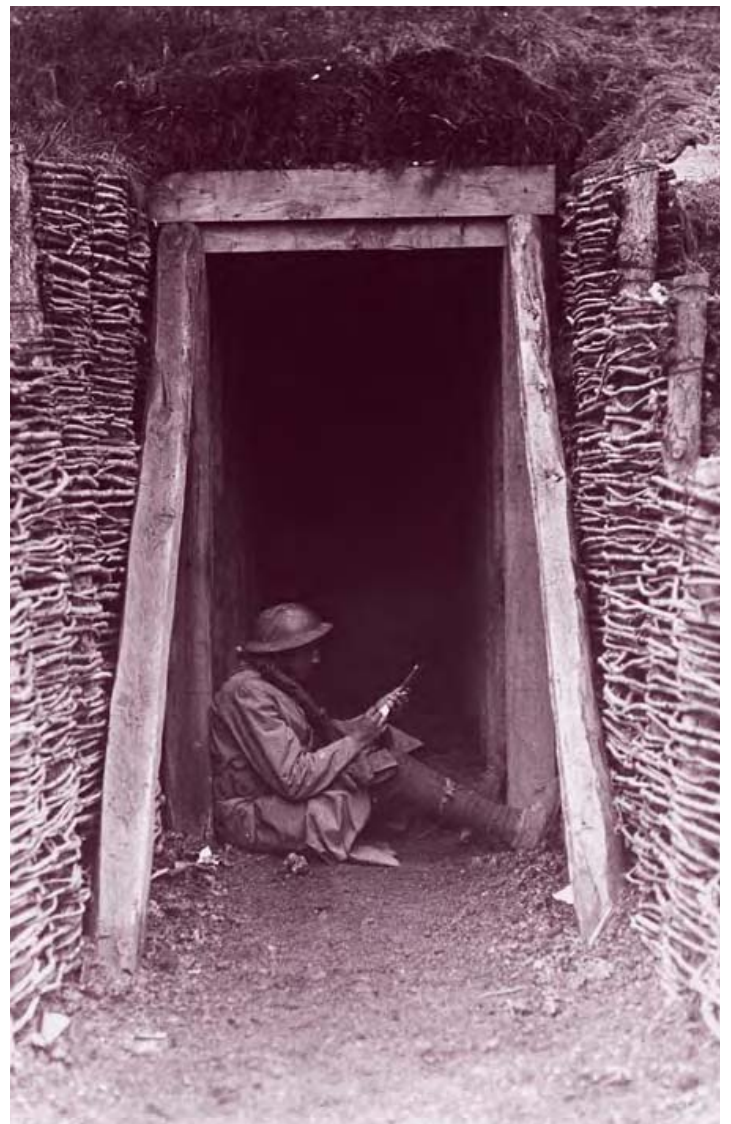


**FOR HEROISM**  
Instituted by Presidential Order in 1918, the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded for extreme heroism against an armed enemy.



Assembled kit, US Infantry Equipment

**KEEPING IN TOUCH**  
Like their colleagues in other armies, many US soldiers had hardly left their home town or state before, and few had ever travelled abroad. Stationed in France, in a country where they could not speak the language, many became deeply homesick. They wrote often to their family and friends, and waited for letters, postcards, and food parcels in return.





Air tubes

**TO THE RESCUE**

A gas attack or a shell burst near a mine tunnel entrance could fill the mine with fumes, suffocating the men working inside. This German breathing apparatus was kept on standby for use by rescue parties.

# Under enemy lines

FOR MUCH OF the war on the Western Front, the two sides faced each other in rows of heavily fortified trenches. These massive defences were very difficult to overcome, so engineers found ways of undermining them. The British army recruited coal miners and “clay-kickers”, who used to dig tunnels for London Underground. The Germans had their own miners. Both excavated tunnels and mines deep under enemy lines and packed them with explosives, ready to be detonated when an attack began. Counter-mines were also dug to cut into and destroy enemy mines before they could be finished. The opposing miners sometimes met and fought in underground battles. Vast mines were exploded by the British at the Battle of the Somme on 1 July 1916, but their most effective use was under Messines Ridge at the start of the Battle of Passchendaele.



**SAPPERS AT WORK**

British artist David Bomberg’s painting shows members of the Royal Engineers, known as sappers, digging and reinforcing an underground trench. Sappers ensured that trenches and tunnels were properly constructed and did not collapse.



**OXYGEN RELIEF**

This British breathing apparatus is similar to the German equipment on the left. Compressed oxygen contained in the breathing bags was released through the air tubes to help the miner breathe.

Background picture: One of many British mines explodes under German lines at the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916



*"It is horrible. You often wish you were dead, there is no shelter, we are lying in water ... our clothes do not dry."*

GERMAN SOLDIER, PASSCHENDAELE, 1917

#### WATERLOGGED

The water table around Ypres was very high, so the trenches were built above ground by banking up earth and sandbags. Even so, the trenches were constantly flooded. Pumping out mines and trenches, as these Australian tunnellers are doing at Hooge, Belgium in September 1917, was an essential, never-ending task.



## Passchendaele

During 1917, the British planned a massive attack against the German front line around Ypres, Belgium. They aimed to break into Belgium and capture the channel ports, stopping the German submarines from using them as a base to attack British shipping. The Battle of Messines began on 7 June 1917. After a huge artillery bombardment, 19 mines packed with 1 million tons of explosive blew up simultaneously under the German lines on Messines Ridge. The noise could be heard in London 220 km (140 miles) away. The ridge was soon captured, but the British failed to take quick advantage. Heavy rainfall in August and October turned the battlefield into a muddy marshland. The village and ridge of Passchendaele were eventually captured on 10 November 1917, only to be lost again the following March. In summer 1918, the Allies re-captured and kept the ground.



#### MUDDY QUAGMIRE

Heavy rainfall and constant shelling at Passchendaele created a deadly mudbath. Many injured men died as they were unable to lift themselves clear of the cloying mud. Stretcher bearers were barely able to carry the wounded to dressing stations. The British poet Siegfried Sassoon wrote that "I died in hell – (They called it Passchendaele)".

Below: British troops moving forward over shell-torn ground during the Battle of Passchendaele.



# The final year



## NEW LEADER

In 1917, Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik (Communist) Party, became the new ruler of Russia. He was opposed to the war, and ordered an immediate cease-fire when he came to power.



German and Russian troops celebrating the cease-fire on the Eastern Front, 1917

## Russia pulls out

The Russian government became increasingly unpopular as the war progressed. The army was demoralized by constant defeats, and by early 1917, there was large-scale fraternization with German troops along the Eastern Front. In February 1917, a revolution overthrew the Tsar, but the new government continued the war. A second revolution in October brought the Bolshevik Party to power. A cease-fire was agreed with Germany, and in March 1918 Russia signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and withdrew from the war.

### THE LUDENDORFF OFFENSIVE

On 21 March 1918 General Ludendorff launched a huge attack on the Western Front. He hoped to defeat Britain and France before US reinforcements could arrive. The attack took the Allies by surprise and Germany advanced by almost 64 km (40 miles) by July, but at the heavy cost of 500,000 casualties.

IN EARLY 1918, the war looked to be turning in favour of Germany and her allies. Russia had withdrawn from the war, enabling Germany to concentrate her efforts on the Western Front, and US troops had yet to arrive in France in any great numbers. A vast offensive in March brought German troops to within 64 km (40 miles) of Paris. But behind the lines, Germany was far from strong. The Allied blockade of German ports meant that the country was short of vital supplies. The railway network was collapsing through lack of maintenance and food was short. Strikes and even mutinies became common. Elsewhere, Ottoman Turkey and Bulgaria collapsed in the face of Allied attacks, while the Italians scored a decisive victory against Austria-Hungary. By early November, Germany stood alone. On 7 November, a German delegation crossed the front line to discuss peace terms with the Allies. The war was almost over.



French and British troops in action during the Ludendorff Offensive



**8 January** US President Wilson issues 14 Points for Peace  
**3 March** Treaty of Brest-Litovsk – Russia leaves the war  
**21 March** Vast German Ludendorff

offensive on the Western Front  
**15 July** Last German offensive launched on Western Front  
**18 July** French counter-attack begins on the Marne

**8 August** British launch offensive near Amiens  
**12 September** Americans launch offensive at St Mihiel  
**14 September** Allies attack

Bulgarians at Salonika  
**25 September** Bulgaria seeks peace  
**27 September** British begin to breach Hindenburg Line



**BATTLE OF THE MARNE**  
 On 18 July 1918, French and US forces, led by General Foch, counter-attacked against the German advance on the River Marne, east of Paris. They stopped the German offensive in its tracks and began to push the Germans back eastwards. By 6 August, the Germans had lost 168,000 men, many buried where they fell on the battlefields (left). The tide of battle had at last turned decisively in favour of the Allied armies.

*French soldiers identifying German dead before burial*

**CROSSING THE LINE**  
 On 8 August 1918 a massive British offensive began near Amiens. The German army was increasingly short of men and vital supplies, including food, so gave little resistance. The Allied troops continued to push forwards towards the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. On 29 September, the British 46th North Midland Division captured the bridge at Riqueval, over the St Quentin Canal. They posed for a celebratory photograph, because they had broken the Line at last.



*Many French children did not remember life before the German occupation of their towns and cities*

*Background picture: German troops advancing at the Somme, April 1918*



*French children march alongside the Allied army*

**THE LAST DAYS**  
 By 5 October, the Allied armies had breached the entire Hindenburg Line and were crossing open country. Both sides suffered great casualties as the German army was pushed steadily eastwards. The British and French recaptured towns and cities lost in 1914, including Lille (left), and by early November 1918 they recaptured Mons, where they had fired the first shots of the war in August 1914. By now, the German retreat was turning into a rout.

**28 September** German commander Ludendorff advises the Kaiser to seek peace as army crumbles  
**1 October** British capture Ottoman Turkish-held Damascus

**6 October** German government starts to negotiate an armistice  
**21 October** Czechoslovakia declares its independence  
**24 October** Italian army begins

decisive battle of Vittorio-Veneto against Austria-Hungary  
**29 October** German fleet mutinies  
**30 October** Ottoman Turkey agrees an armistice

**4 November** Austria-Hungary agrees an armistice  
**9 November** The Kaiser abdicates  
**11 November** Armistice between Germany and the Allies; war ends



**CARRIAGE TALKS**

On 7 November 1918, a German delegation headed by a government minister, Matthias Erzberger, crossed the front line to meet the Allied commander-in-chief, Marshal Foch, in his railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne. At 5 a.m. on 11 November, the two sides signed an armistice agreement to come into effect six hours later.

# Armistice and peace

AT 11 AM ON THE 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the guns of Europe fell silent after more than four years of war. The problems of war were now replaced by the equally pressing problems of peace. Germany had asked for an armistice (cease-fire) in order to discuss a possible peace treaty. She had not surrendered but her soldiers were surrendering in hordes and her navy had mutinied. The Allies wanted to make sure that Germany would never go to war again. The eventual peace treaty re-drew the map of Europe and forced Germany to pay massive damages to the Allies. German armed forces were reduced in size and strength and Germany lost a great deal of land and all of her overseas colonies.



**DISPLACED PEOPLE**

Many refugees, like these Lithuanians, were displaced during the war. The end of hostilities allowed thousands of refugees – mainly French, Belgians, Italians, and Serbians whose lands had been occupied by the Central Powers – to return home to their newly liberated countries. In addition, there were as many as 6.5 million prisoners of war who needed to be repatriated. This complex task was finally achieved by autumn 1919.

**SPREADING THE NEWS**

News of the armistice spread around the world in minutes. It was reported in newspapers and typed out in telegrams, while word-of-mouth spread the joyous news to each and every member of the local neighbourhood.

**VIVE LA PAIX!**

In Paris (below), French, British, and American soldiers joined Parisians in an impromptu procession through the city. In London, women and children danced in the streets while their men prepared to return from the front. In Germany, the news was greeted with a mixture of shock and relief that the fighting was at last over.





**SIGNING THE TREATY**

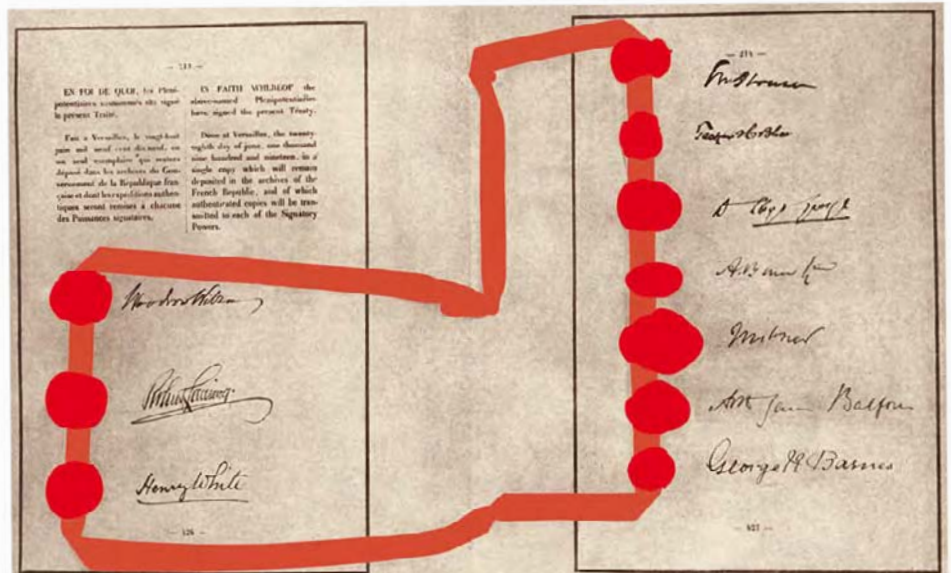
These soldiers watching the signing of the Treaty of Versailles had waited a long time for this moment. The Allies first met their German counterparts in January 1919. The Americans wanted a fair and just treaty that guaranteed democracy and freedom to all people, while both France and to a lesser extent Britain wanted to keep Germany weak and divided. Negotiations almost broke down several times before a final agreement was reached in June 1919.

**THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES**

The peace treaty that ended the war was signed in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles near Paris, on 28 June 1919. Sir William Orpen's painting shows the four Allied leaders watching the German delegates sign the treaty ending German imperial power in Europe, just 48 years after the German Empire had been proclaimed in the same hall.

**THE PEACE TREATIES**

The Treaty of Versailles was signed by representatives of the Allied powers and Germany. The Allies signed subsequent treaties elsewhere in Paris with Austria in September 1919, Bulgaria in November 1919, Turkey in April 1920, and Hungary in June 1920. By then, a new map of Europe had emerged.



The Treaty of Versailles



General Foch

Georges Clemenceau

David Lloyd George

Vittorio Orlando

Giorgio Sonnino

**THE VICTORIOUS ALLIES**

The negotiations in Paris were dominated by French premier Georges Clemenceau (supported by General Foch), British premier David Lloyd George, Italian premier Vittorio Orlando – seen here with his foreign minister, Giorgio Sonnino – and the US president Woodrow Wilson. Together the Big Four, as they became known, thrashed out the main details of the peace settlement.

# The cost of the war



## ONE LIFE

A soldier stands on Pilckem Ridge during the Battle of Passchendaele in August 1917. The crudely made cross indicates a hastily dug grave, but many soldiers were engulfed by the mud and their graves remained unmarked.

THE COST OF THE First World War in human lives is unimaginable. More than 65 million men fought, of whom more than half were killed or injured – 8 million killed, 2 million died of illness and disease, 21.2 million wounded, and 7.8 million taken prisoner or missing. In addition, about 6.6 million civilians perished. Among the combatant nations, with the exception of the USA, there was barely a family that had not lost at least one son or brother; some had lost every male member. Entire towns and villages

were wiped off the map, and fertile farmland was turned into deadly bogland. Financially, the economies of Europe were ruined, while the USA emerged as a major world power. Not surprisingly, at the end of 1918, people hoped they would never again have to experience the slaughter and destruction they had lived through for the past four years.



## THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

Many of the dead were so badly disfigured that it was impossible to identify them. Plain crosses mark their graves. Thousands more just disappeared, presumed dead. Both France and Britain ceremoniously buried one unknown warrior – at the Arc de Triomphe, Paris, and Westminster Abbey, London.

## AFTERCARE

The war left thousands of soldiers disfigured and disabled. Reconstructive surgery helped repair facial damage, while masks and prosthetics were used to cover horrible disfigurements. Artificial limbs gave many disabled soldiers some mobility.

But the horrors of the war remained with many soldiers for the rest of their lives.

*Some soldiers stayed in nursing homes for the rest of their lives*

*Many soldiers painted to pass the time*

*Background picture: Poppies in the battlefields of northern France*







**MEMENTOS**

A profusion of flowers, including red Flanders poppies, grew along both sides of the Western Front. Soldiers, such as Private Jack Mudd of the 214 Battalion of the London Regiment (above), would press them as mementos to send home to their loved ones. Mudd sent this poppy to his wife Lizzie before he was killed, in 1917, in the Battle of Passchendaele. Canadian doctor, John McCrae, wrote the poem *In Flanders Fields* after tending wounded soldiers near Ypres in 1915. His mention of poppies in the poem inspired the British Legion to sell paper poppies to raise money for injured soldiers, and as a sign of remembrance for the dead.



**WAR MEMORIALS**

The entire length of the Western Front is marked with graveyards and memorials to those who lost their lives in the war. At Verdun, the French national mausoleum and ossuary (burial vault) at Douaumont (below) contains the remains of 130,000 unidentified French and German soldiers. There are 410 British cemeteries in the Somme valley alone.

Prussian Iron Cross



Victoria Cross (V.C.)



**FOR GALLANTRY**

Every combatant nation awarded military and civilian medals to honour bravery. Five million Iron Crosses were given to German soldiers and their allies. Over two million Croix de Guerre were issued to French soldiers, military units, civilians, and towns, and 576 Victoria Crosses, Britain's highest award, were presented to British and Empire troops.

French Croix de Guerre



# Did you know?

## BITE-SIZED FACTS

✚ On the morning of 1 July 1916 the Allies began their offensive on the Somme. The preceding artillery barrage lasted a week. Some people on the south coast of England actually heard two of the mines explode.

✚ Every British soldier was given army-issue boots in time to wear them in. From the Somme onwards, each soldier also had his own steel helmet. Specialist items, such as rubber waders, were kept as communal stores – handed from one unit to another.



Map of Europe in 1914 by Walter Trier

✚ Food was prepared in field kitchens that could be several kilometres behind the front line. It was impossible to take transport into the trench, so food was carried to the front on foot.

Filling a Thermos container that kept the food hot



✚ Prague-born Walter Trier (1890–1951) produced political cartoons. One famous work shows Europe in 1914 on the eve of World War I, with the national leaders squabbling and threatening each other.

✚ The Pool of Peace is a 12-m (40-ft) deep lake near Messines, Belgium. It fills a crater made in 1917 when the British detonated a mine containing 41,325 kg (40 tons) of explosives.

✚ Some soldiers wore knitted helmets called balaclavas to stay warm in winter. Balaclavas are named after the battle where they were first worn – the Battle of Balaclava, which took place during the Crimean War (1854).



A German messenger dog laying telegraph wire

✚ Messenger dogs carried orders to the front line in capsules strapped to their bodies. Dogs also helped military communications in another way – some of them were trained to lay down telegraph wire!



British Army clothing, left to right: a warm coat for transport drivers; a flameproof suit for flame thrower operators; winter camouflage for trench raiding; and flying clothing

✚ Flame throwers were first used by the Germans. They fired jets of flame as far as 40 m (131 ft).

✚ The nation with the largest army was Russia. It mobilized 12 million troops. Over three-quarters were killed, wounded, or went missing in action.

✚ At first British tanks were split into “males” and “females”. Male tanks had cannons, while females had heavy machine guns.

✚ The first prototype tank, “Little Willie”, was built in 1915. It carried a crew of three and had a top speed of 4.8 km/h (3 mph).

✚ Tunnellers laid mines on the Western Front. Sometimes underground fights broke out, if they dug into an enemy tunnel by mistake.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Modern-day camouflage

### Q Who was “Big Bertha”?

A Big Bertha was a 43,700-kg (43-ton) howitzer used by the Germans in World War I. Its designer, Gustav Krupp, named the weapon after his wife. Big Bertha was more mobile than the previous 420-mm (16.5-in) howitzer; it could be transported to its firing position by tractor. Even so, it took its crew of 200 men six hours or more to assemble it. Big Bertha was a formidable weapon. It could fire a 1,000-kg (2,200-lb) shell a distance of 15 km (9.3 miles). Big Bertha’s first successes were at Liege in Belgium. The 12 forts ringing the city were destroyed in three days.

### Q Why did soldiers keep animals?

A Most animals that travelled with the army had a job to do. Mules, horses, and camels were kept as draft or pack animals to transport heavy supplies.



Soldiers with their rabbits and chickens

Messenger dogs and pigeons carried important communications. Away from the front line, some soldiers kept animals for food – rabbits for the cooking pot or hens for their eggs. Some animals were kept simply to keep up morale. Dogs, for example, were popular, but one group of South African soldiers had an impala as their lucky mascot!

### Q How did soldiers camouflage themselves?

A World War I was the first major conflict in which soldiers made use of camouflage. They wore khaki uniforms that blended in with the background. Some snipers made camouflaged suits out of painted sacking. Steel helmets were often painted with matt paint mixed with sand or sawdust so that they would not reflect the light; other times they were smeared with mud or covered with sacking or sandbags. Soldiers also used sacking or netting to hide their equipment from the reconnaissance aircraft patrolling the skies, but blending in was not the only camouflage possibility. The disruptive patterns painted on to battleships also worked – just as a zebra’s stripes can confuse a lion.

### Q How did soldiers know when to put on their gas masks?

A There were soldiers on lookout duty night and day. These sentries used whatever they could find to raise the alarm – bells, rattles, whistles, or just their own voice. When the soldiers heard the alarm they put on their gas masks as quickly as they could – hopefully before the deadly gas drifted towards the trench.

### Q Why were tanks called tanks?

A While it was being developed, the tank was known as a “landship”. However, there were fears that this name was too obvious. Before long, a German spy might become curious about why so many of these objects were being produced, and the Germans might catch on to the new invention. The British had to come up with a believable name. They decided that, with its rectangular body-shape, perhaps it could be passed off as a water storage tank. At first, they chose the name “water carrier” – until someone noticed that this would be abbreviated to “WC”. In the end they decided on “tank” instead.



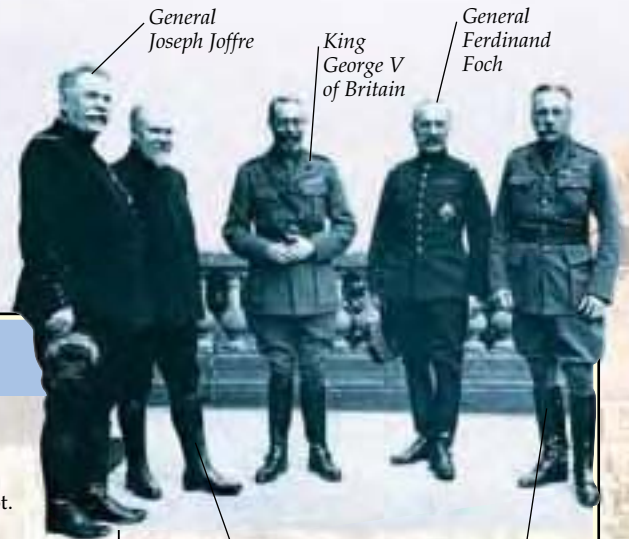
Sentry wears mask to protect from gas attack

Metal bell sounds the alarm

A sentry on duty

# Key people and places

SO MANY PEOPLE played an important role in planning or fighting World War I. It is impossible to cover them all, but here are a few of them, together with a checklist of some of the key battle sites.



General Joseph Joffre

King George V of Britain

General Ferdinand Foch

## IMPORTANT PERSONALITIES



Russian General Brusilov

### ALEXEI BRUSILOV (1853–1926)

With his "Brusilov offensive" of 1916, General Brusilov broke Austro-Hungarian lines. He took command of Russian armies on the Eastern Front in 1917.

### LUIGI CADORNA (1850–1928)

The general in charge of the Italian army was Luigi Cadorna. His only success was the recapture of Gorizia in 1916.

### FERDINAND FOCH (1851–1929)

Artillery specialist Ferdinand Foch successfully led the French at the Marne. By 1918 he was co-ordinating all the Allied forces on the Western Front.

### ANTHONY FOKKER (1890–1939)

Dutch designer Anthony Fokker developed the first fighter plane with a forward-facing synchronized machine gun. His Fokker Eindecker gave Germany the edge in the early part of the war. Fokker produced 40 different aircrafts during the war.

### RENÉ FONCK (1894–1953)

Frenchman René Fonck was the Allies' most successful fighter pilot. He shot down 75 enemy planes.

### DOUGLAS HAIG (1861–1928)

The general in charge of British troops on the Western Front was Sir Douglas Haig. He ordered the offensives at the Somme and Passchendaele, as well as the final, successful Allied offensive.

### PAUL VON HINDENBURG (1847–1934)

Early in the war, Paul von Hindenburg successfully led the Germans against the Russians. By 1916, he commanded all German land forces. His Hindenburg Line, created in 1917, withstood attack till 1918.

### JOSEPH JOFFRE (1852–1931)

When the war broke out, Joseph Joffre became Commander of the French army. He planned attacks on the Western Front but, after heavy losses, was replaced in 1916.

### T.E. LAWRENCE (1888–1935)

Known as Lawrence of Arabia, T.E. Lawrence worked for Allied intelligence in the Middle East. He led an Arab revolt against the Turks, which he wrote about in his book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*.

President Raymond Poincaré of France

General Sir Douglas Haig

### RITTMEISTER VON RICHTHOFEN (1892–1918)

Known as the Red Baron, this German aviator shot down 80 planes – more than any other World War I pilot. He died after being shot down near Amiens.

### MAXIMILIAN VON SPEE (1861–1914)

German admiral Maximilian von Spee sank two British cruisers off Chile. He died when his own ship, the *Scharnhorst*, went down near the Falkland Islands.

### GABRIEL VOISIN (1880–1973)

French-born Gabriel Voisin was an aircraft designer. He is famous for his Voisin III (the first Allied plane to shoot down an enemy) and his Voisin V bomber, which was armed with a cannon.

### MARGARETHA ZELLE (1876–1917)

Dutch-born Margaretha Zelle was better known as Mata Hari. She always denied being a double agent, but it is possible that she spied for both the French and Germans. The French executed her in 1917.



Anthony Fokker with his Fokker D1 aircraft

Propeller rotation was synchronized with gunfire



Aircraft designer Gabriel Voisin (right)

# MAJOR BATTLES



Tanks pass through Meaulte, France, during the Amiens offensive

## AMIENS

In August 1918, General Rawlinson led his successful Allied offensive to recapture the Amiens Line. On the first day, the Allies advanced 12 km (7.5 miles).

## CAMBRAI

General Haig took the Germans by surprise in November 1917 when he attacked them at Cambrai, France. At first, the Allies gained good ground, but within a fortnight the Germans had regained their position. The estimated casualties were 45,000 British soldiers and 50,000 Germans.

## GAZA

General Dobell led a British attack on Turkish-held Gaza in March 1917. The port was a strategic target, on the way to Palestine. The British took the Turks by surprise, but were soon forced to retreat. They eventually captured Gaza in November, after weakening its defences with bombardment from offshore ships.



A British dressing station at Cambrai

## HELIGOLAND BIGHT

In August 1914, two British light cruisers and 25 destroyers attacked German ships near the naval base on Heligoland in the North Sea. In the battle that followed, the British sank three cruisers and a destroyer.

## JUTLAND

May 1916 saw the war's only major sea battle, off the Danish coast of Jutland. Both sides claimed victory. The Germans inflicted the heaviest losses, but the British had maintained control of the North Sea.



*The Retreat from Mons (1927)*  
by Lady Elizabeth Butler

## MONS

The British Expeditionary Force met the advancing German army at Mons, France, in August 1914. Although the Germans suffered heavy losses, they managed to force back the British to the River Marne.

## PASSCHENDAELE

The Battle of Passchendaele, Belgium, began in July 1917. First, the Allies spent 10 days bombarding the Germans. Then they advanced, but were slowed down by torrential rains. The Allies finally took the ridge of Passchendaele in November.

## SOMME

July 1916 saw the start of the Battle of the Somme, France. On the first day, the British suffered 58,000 casualties. Despite this, the Allies continued their offensive until November. When it was finally called off, the Allies had suffered 620,000 casualties and the Germans an estimated 500,000 casualties.



## VERDUN

The Germans attacked the French garrison town of Verdun in February 1916. Initially they outnumbered the French five to one, but their advance halted within a week. The battle ran on for 10 months and nearly a million men lost their lives.

## VITTORIO-VENETO

One of the last offensives of the war was when the Italians recaptured Vittorio-Veneto on 29 October 1918. The Austro-Hungarian forces had retreated the day before.

## YPRES

The Belgian town of Ypres was taken by the Germans in August 1914, but the British recaptured it in October. During the failed German counterattack, the British forces were decimated. A second battle of Ypres took place in April and May 1915 and a third, Passchendaele, in 1917.

A British field kitchen at the Somme, 1916

# Find out more

THERE ARE MANY WAYS you can find out more about World War I. Ask older generations of your family if they remember stories about relatives who fought in the war. There are personal accounts online, too, plus lots of other information. Try your library for specialist books on the topic and visit war museums. As well as vast collections of fascinating objects, these often have interactive displays. Television documentaries also bring the war to life with real or reconstructed footage. Finally, remember there is a wealth of old war films, that will give you a feel for what life was like.



## REMEMBRANCE DAY

Everyone can play a part in commemorating the sacrifices of soldiers and civilians during World War I. Each year, on the Sunday nearest to 1 November, services are held at local and national war memorials.

## THE TANK MUSEUM

Fans of tracked vehicles should head to Bovington, Dorset, to see the world's largest tank collection. A key attraction is the first tank prototype, Little Willie. The museum also has a programme of special events.



*Poppy symbolizes remembrance*

## ARC DE TRIOMPHE

Originally built by Napoleon to celebrate the victories of his armies, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, France, now keeps the memory of the millions of soldiers killed in World War I. Its flame of remembrance is rekindled each day and, in November 1920, the body of an unknown soldier was buried under the monument. He is there to symbolize the soldiers who died in the war.



*Anzac veteran wears wartime medals and decorations*

*French tricolour (national flag) is flown each year on 11 November*



## ANZAC DAY

If you are in Australia or New Zealand on 25 April, you will be able to take part in Anzac Day. There are parades and ceremonies to mark the lives of the thousands of Australian and New Zealand soldiers who died at Gallipoli, Turkey, in 1915.



#### WAR FILMS

A great many movies have been made about the events of World War I. They may not always be based on solid facts, but they are an entertaining way to get a flavour of the time and events. One of the best is *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962). Directed by David Lean, it starred Peter O'Toole (shown above) in the title role.

#### USEFUL WEBSITES

- Easy-to-navigate site on all aspects of the war [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWW.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWW.htm)
- A multimedia site about World War I [www.firstworldwar.com](http://www.firstworldwar.com)
- First-person accounts, sound files, movies, and animations, plus a curriculum-related kids' area [www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/index.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/index.shtml)
- Online collection of 100 paintings to mark the war [www.art-ww1.com/gb/visite.html](http://www.art-ww1.com/gb/visite.html)

## Places to visit

#### AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL, CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

- Gallipoli gallery with life-size reconstructions and diorama
- Western Front exhibition depicting trench warfare, including video footage
- "Lone Pine Tree" grown from a seed sent from Gallipoli by a soldier to his mother

#### HISTORIAL DE LA GRANDE GUERRE, PERONNE, FRANCE

- Thousands of wartime artefacts, with themes including children and prisoners
- Collection of war paintings by German artist Otto Dix
- Offers a 60-km (37-mile) "Circuit of Remembrance" – a tour of key battle sites in northern France

#### IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM, LONDON, UK

- World War I tank, plus a dedicated gallery with firearms, uniforms, posters, medals, and other memorabilia in themed areas
- Walk-through "Trench Experience" with sights, sounds, and smells that bring the Battle of the Somme to life
- Access to its collections online at [www.iwmcollections.org.uk](http://www.iwmcollections.org.uk)

#### THE ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS MUSEUM, BLANDFORD, DORSET, UK

- Special area devoted to new technologies of World War I, including the development of the military telephone and wireless
- Exhibits on the use of animals in war

#### THE TANK MUSEUM, BOVINGTON, UK

- Almost 300 tanks from over 26 countries
- Exhibits cover the history of tanks from World War I to the present day



*Life-size model shows army doctor dressing wounds*

*Sculpture shows parents mourning the loss of their son*

#### WAR MONUMENT

Many artists and writers were so horrified or moved by the war that they felt compelled to express these feelings in their work. German sculptor Kathe Kollwitz (1867–1945) made this statue for the German war cemetery at Roggevelde, Belgium. Her own son, Peter, is buried there.



#### IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

This exhibit is part of the Trench Experience at the Imperial War Museum, London. A combination of lights, sounds, and smells helps visitors to understand just how terrifying and disorientating trench life was.

# Glossary



Nurses wheel convalescent soldiers around the hospital grounds

**ABDICATE** Give up office or power.

**ALLIANCE** A group of allies, who have agreed to act in co-operation. Allied countries often set out their shared aims in an official treaty.

**ALTITUDE** Height above sea level.

**AMMUNITION** Bullets and shells fired from weapons.

**AMPUTATION** Surgical removal of a body part, such as an arm or leg.

**ANZAC** Member of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

**ARMISTICE** End of hostilities. Armistice Day, now known as Remembrance Sunday, is commemorated each year on the Sunday closest to 11 November.

**ARMS RACE** Competition between nations to build up weaponry, or armaments.

**ARTILLERY** Armed forces that use heavy weapons, such as cannons.

**ASSASSINATION** The murder of someone for political purposes.

**BATTERY** The place where a cannon, or other form of artillery, is positioned.

**BAYONET** A blade fixed to a rifle or other firearm. The bayonet can be used to stab the enemy when fighting at close quarters.

**BULLY BEEF** Another name for corned beef.

**BUNKER** An underground bomb shelter.

**BUTTON STICK** Metal slide used to protect a soldier's uniform from polish when shining their buttons.

**CAMOUFLAGE** Colouring designed to blend in with the background. During World War I, this was mostly limited to attempts to conceal gun positions, although some soldiers blackened their faces before night patrols and snipers wore camouflaged suits.

**CAVALRY** Originally, soldiers on horseback, but the term came to mean soldiers using motorized transport, such as tanks.

**CLIP** A means of carrying and rapidly loading rifle ammunition.

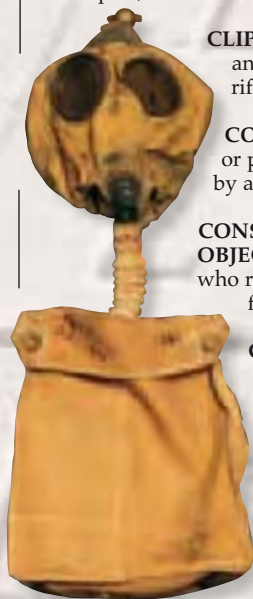
**COLONY** A dependency, or place, that is ruled by a foreign nation.

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR** Someone who refuses to fight for moral reasons.

**CONSCRIPT** Someone who is forced by law to fight in the army.

**CONSCRIPTION** Making people fight in the army.

Small box respirator gas mask



**CONVALESCENT** Someone who has been seriously injured or ill and is slowly recovering.

**CONVOY** Merchant ships travelling together, protected by a naval escort.

**CREEPING BARRAGE** A line of artillery fire creeping ahead of an infantry advance.

**CRYPTOGRAPHY** The study and creation of secret codes.

**DETONATE** To explode or cause to explode.

**DYSENTERY** An infection of the intestines that causes diarrhoea and bloody faeces.

**EMPLACEMENT** A mound or platform from which guns are fired.

**ENDEMIC** Found in a particular area, or among a certain group of people.

**ENLIST** Call or sign up to the armed forces.

**ENTENTE** A friendly agreement or informal alliance between nations.



An intelligence officer inspects aerial photographs of enemy trenches

**EVACUATION** Moving people away from a place where they are in danger.

**FLOTILLA** A fleet or group of small ships.

**FRONT LINE** The border between enemy territories, where the fighting is.

**FUSELAGE** The body of an aeroplane.

**GAS** In the context of war, "gas" means a poisonous gas, such as chlorine, used as a weapon to choke, blind, or kill the enemy.

**GRENADE** A small bomb that is hurled by hand.

**GUERRILLA** A soldier in a guerrilla army – a small-scale outfit that practises sabotage and hit-and-run attacks. Guerrilla comes from the Spanish for "small war".





An American propaganda poster

**HOWITZER** A short gun that fired high.

**INCENDIARY** Describes a bomb, bullet, or other device designed to cause fire.

**INFANTRY** Foot soldiers.

**INTELLIGENCE** Useful military or political information, or the spies that gather it.

**INTERROGATE**  
Question someone aggressively.



British .303-in (7.7-mm)  
Maxim Mark 3 medium  
machine gun, c. 1902

**KNOT** A unit for measuring a ship's speed. One knot equals 1.85 km/h (1.15 mph).

**MACHINE GUN** An automatic gun that fires bullets in rapid succession.

**MEDICAL ORDERLY** A soldier with some medical training, who works in an army medical establishment.

**MESS TIN** A soldier's cooking pot.

**MINE** A large underground chamber packed with explosives, placed under enemy lines by tunnellers.

**MOBILIZATION** Preparation of troops for active service.

**MORALE** Strength of purpose, confidence, or faith.

**MORSE CODE** A code where each letter of the alphabet is represented by a sequence of dots and dashes, or by long or short signals of light or sound. It is named after its inventor, Samuel Morse (1791–1872).

**MUNITIONS** Stores of weapons and other military equipment.

**NEUTRALITY** The state of not taking sides.

**NO-MAN'S-LAND** An area of land between two opposing forces, that has not been captured by either side.

**NON-COMBATANT** Someone connected with the army but not there to fight, for example a chaplain or army doctor.

**PERISCOPE** A device that uses mirrors to allow the user to see things that are not in his or her direct line of sight.

**PICQUET** A metal stake used to tether an entanglement – that is, a tangle of barbed wire used to fortify the front-row trenches.

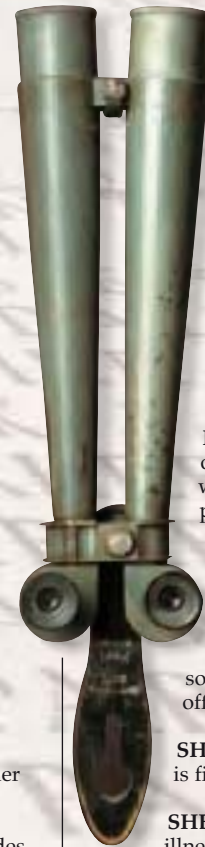
**POSTHUMOUSLY** After death.

**PROPAGANDA** Information intended to convince people of a particular viewpoint. It may take the form of posters, broadcasts, or air-dropped leaflets, for example.

**PUTTEE** A strip of cloth wound around the lower part of the leg.

**RECONNAISSANCE** Taking a preliminary look at an area before sending in troops, usually in order to locate the enemy.

**RECONNOITRE**  
To survey an area in preparation for a military advance.



German stereoscopic periscope

**RECRUIT** Someone who is enlisted into the army.

**REGULAR FORCES** Soldiers who already belong to the army, rather than conscripts.

**RESERVE FORCES** People who are not part of the regular army but have received some military training, and are ready to be the first extra troops mobilized in an emergency.

**RESPIRATOR** A device worn over the face to prevent the wearer from breathing in poison gas.

**RIFLE** A long-barrelled gun, fired from shoulder level.

**SEAPLANE** An aircraft equipped with floats or skis so that it can land on or take off from water.

**SHELL** An explosive device that is fired, for example from a cannon.

**SHELLSHOCK** Mental strain or illness suffered by a soldier who has fought in a war.

**SHRAPNEL** A type of antipersonnel projectile that contained small shot or spherical bullets, usually of lead, along with an explosive charge to scatter the shot.

**TELEGRAPH** A communications device that transmits messages by means of electrical signals along a wire.

**TERRORIST** Someone who commits violent acts to bring about or draw attention to their political aims.

**TORPEDO** A self-propelled underwater missile that can be fired from a boat or submarine.

**TRENCH** A ditch dug by soldiers that gives some protection against enemy fire.

**TRUCE** An agreement to stop fighting.

**U-BOAT** A German submarine.

**ULTIMATUM** A final demand which, if it is not met, will result in serious consequences and a total breakdown of communication.

**WAR BOND** A certificate issued by a government in return for the investment of a sum of money. The money raised by the bonds helps pay for the war. It is repaid later with interest.

**WAR OF ATTRITION** Continuously attacking to wear down the enemy.

**WIRELESS** A communications device that sends messages as radio signals.



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# Acknowledgements

## Dorling Kindersley and the author would like to thank:

Elizabeth Bowers, Christopher Dowling, Mark Pindelski, and the photography archive team at the Imperial War Museum for their invaluable help; Right Section, Kings Own Royal Horse Artillery for firing the gun shown on page 10.

**Editorial assistance:** Carey Scott  
**Index:** Lynn Bresler

The publishers would also like to thank the following for their kind permission to reproduce their photographs:

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