

## Weapons of War – Trench warfare

### Life in the Trenches

Life in the trenches was rough on soldiers. They had to worry about rats, catching diseases, shellfire, and body lice. Food was also in short supply towards the end of the war. If you were injured, it could take a while until you were treated. Some injuries were so bad that they had to be amputated. Also, if you disobeyed your orders you ran the risk of being executed. However, the soldiers did get a small daily ration of alcohol.

### Trench System

Between the trenches of opposing sides was a stretch of land known as no-man's land. It had already been deformed by shellfire, and in wet weather it was extremely hard to walk through this area. Behind no-man's land was barbed wire meters deep and it was almost impossible for troops to pass. Next was the front line. Being on the front line was extremely dangerous. You had to worry about shellfire as well as being hit by your own artillery behind you. Beyond the front line were the support and reserve trenches, followed by the communications trench. The communications trenches were used to transport men, equipment, and food supplies. Finally, at the back of the trenches was a lot of long-range artillery equipment. Soldiers usually served eight days on the front line, then four days in the reserve trench. That was followed by a four-day resting period away from the trenches. However, this system wasn't always followed when there was a shortage of men. Sometimes men would serve weeks on the front line.

### Forts

Fortresses were used in various countries; mainly used to protect important cities. They were defensive points armed with heavy artillery. One of the more important forts, such as Fort Douaumont, was protected by thick concrete, deep moats, and barbed wire.

### Snipers

Soldiers on the front line also had to worry about enemy snipers. Snipers were trained marksmen carrying rifles with telescopic sights. They would find a tree in no man's land, climb it, and wait. They wore camouflage clothing, and when an enemy soldier walked by, the sniper would shoot him in the head.

## Tunneling

During World War I miners often dug tunnels, and placed mines in them. The main objective of these mines was to destroy part of an enemy trench, and then attack during the confusion. Soldiers eventually developed strategies for discovering enemy tunnels. One method was to put one end of a stick in the ground, and the other end on your teeth to feel vibrations. Another method was to sink a water-filled oil drum into the floor of the trench, and lower your ear into the water to listen to noise being made by people tunneling. It took a long time to dig a tunnel. Sometimes it took a year. Occasionally miners would dig into their enemy's tunnels; starting an underground fight.

Deaths & Sentence		
Offense	Number of Sentences	Number of Execution
Desertion	2,004	272
Sleeping at Post	449	2
Cowardice	213	14
Disobedience	120	4
Mutiny	55	15
Casting away of arms	6	2

